

Child, Families and Communities

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Published in:
International Handbook of Early Childhood Education

Publication date:
2018

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):
Højholt, C. (2018). Child, Families and Communities. In M. Fleer, & B. van Oers (Eds.), *International Handbook of Early Childhood Education* (Vol. 2). Springer. Springer International Handbooks of Education Series

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Højholt, C. (2018). Child, families and communities. the Netherlands: Springer Netherlands.

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Child, Families and Communities

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Section in forthcoming
International Handbook on Early Childhood Education
edited by
Marilyn Fleer & Bert van Oers

Child, families and communities

- Introducing reflections

Charlotte Højholt

What brings together concepts such as child, families and communities? Why are they included in a specific section of an International Handbook on Early Childhood Education? Due to the initial idea for this book (Fleer & van Oers, this volume), it could be argued that this combination of concepts, opens opportunities for bringing together material from researchers who are currently paving new directions and providing new insights into methodological problems and challenges for research, as well as practice related to children's life and development.

The authors in this section are all engaged in fundamentally rethinking early childhood education and thereby overcoming conceptual problems often criticized as decontextualizing and individualising our approach to children. It has been problematized how children, their ways of living, learning and developing through abstract understandings have been isolated from the social world and its multiplicity of relations. On this background the authors of this section argue for a contextual point of departure aimed at understanding children in their lived environments and aimed at developing different methodological possibilities for this. Such problematics, challenges and rethinking form a background for the heading of the section.

In this introduction I will discuss some actual problems in the field related to this heading. Mainly I aim at presenting the following chapters, their main points and the conceptually as well as methodologically movements they contribute to. This also involves new questions and matters - in continuation of current discussions and changes in our understandings of children and their development, pertinent topics appear. These include children's *significance for each other*, the *shared care* between different parties involved in the life course of children and furthermore, the changing understandings throw light on children's life *across* contexts. Involving these attentions is not just a question of adding supplements to our concepts – it gives new *content* to our concepts and in this way child, families and communities must be conceptualized in new ways and first and foremost in connection to each other.

In these introducing reflections I will touch on how, from my point of view, these interrelated significances point to conceptualizing the child as a participant in compound and historical social practice. In that way the idea with the heading of the section is connected to the mentioned problem about decontextualizing and may offer possibilities for exploring children's development as an aspect of their participation in everyday activities and situated interplay. Going up against abstract isolation of

development as a solo project calls for conceptual possibilities for analysing developmental *conditions* and how persons in a concrete way make up conditions to each other.

Particular the concept of communities – among and about children – challenges foundational understandings of children’s development and points to significances of this attention to the concepts of ‘child’ and ‘families’. This expands the amount of important participants in the process of child development – as e g different family members, friends, peers and professionals working in the institutions responsible for children’s learning and development. All these areas of focus lead to new perspectives on family life and parenting since parenting come to include among other things promoting friendships with peers and collaboration with teachers, pedagogues and other parents.

Hence, the focus on child, families and communities can be seen in the light of a changing child life in a changing world, and in the light of new theoretical approaches to children, their everyday life and their way of living it and developing through life. The section discusses these themes and their inner coherence. It pursues the development of theoretical concepts and methodological ways of exploring children’s lives in respect to the manifold variation between societies, cultures and in respect to specific children and their personal ways of dealing with their different social conditions. The question of children’s everyday life is in various ways taken up here to explore children’s as well as adult’s ways of dealing with different everyday lives.

The purpose is to gather different theoretical discussions, empirical insights and ways of using and elaborating fundamental concepts. The chapters illustrate a quite diverse development in the field: the critique of approaches to children leads to various theoretical contributions and the different conceptualizations of “child”, “families” and “community” illustrate productive tensions and discussions in the field.

In this introduction, first some of the key theoretical discussions will be presented related to new methodologies developed in relation to exploring children, their everyday life and their communities and families. Afterwards some changing perspectives on child, families and communities will be discussed. By that means some of the studies and insights that the reader will meet in this section will be introduced and thereafter the chapters of the section one by one will be presented.

Some key theoretical problems

Theoretical challenges in relation to conceptualising child, communities and families offer many perspectives and one may start from different angles. Three related problematics appear of central importance to prioritize: 1) the critique of developmental concepts for being abstract, normative and

categorising children according to universal standards. 2) The continuous discussions about how to conceptualize the dynamic relationship between an active and developing subject and the social contexts of development, including social understandings, discourses and material conditions for development. 3) The tendencies to move back and forth between essentialist and relational understandings of e.g. “child”, “developmental problems” and “a community”.

A recent milestone to begin with could be Erica Burman’s “Deconstructing Developmental Psychology” from 1994. This work illustrates how our widespread ways of thinking about development are constituted through the twentieth century, closely connected with social policy, family policy, educational policy and practical needs for social control and gender differentiations - as well as differentiations between groups of people and their way of living. In this light, the question then changes from what developmental psychology has “discovered”, to what has made its special issues, topics and answers relevant and in what manner the development of psychological research practice has had an impact on how we in practice relate to children and how developmental psychology has contributed to social and discursive movements.

Normativity is a classical and fundamental problem when it comes to discussions about children, early childhood education, families, upbringing and communities, and especially connected to the concept of development. Can we conceptualize development without laying out what is “the right way” of developing? And as a consequence of this differentiating between children and their ways of developing and categorizing their eventual dilemmas due to such a universal perspective “from above”, from “out-side” and without connections to concrete developmental conditions?

We seem to displace the very attention to children’s developmental conditions when we follow shifting abstract standards for children’s needs and behaviour. Notions about children’s development and about early childhood education have been used to distinguish between wrong and right, to pathologize those individuals and groups who do not meet the idealised models, and especially to point out problematic ways of upbringing. In this way, such notions not only point to how children at different ages should be treated, but also to how family should be lived, to how upbringing tasks should be organized and distributed and to how gender should be an organizing principle. Burman’s point about “mother-blaming” seems as relevant today as when she wrote it for the first time, and can be seen illustrated in this section in an analysis of parenting in India. Doner’s chapter is a striking analysis of the connections between global political changes and specific ideals for early childhood education, in professional institutions as well as in families - and especially in the relationship between these: “Today, mothers are expected to be the main contact between the school and the home. If they don’t come in daily they are quickly cast as problematic” (Doner, this section).

In spite of differences in contexts and approaches, this is a parallel to Højholt & Kousholt's analysis of how family background is pointed out in relation to school problems in Denmark and a parallel to Andenæs & Haavind's analysis of sharing early care in Norway. In her own "Towards a post-human developmental psychology of child, families and communities" Erica Burman takes us a step further in relation to critique and theory development, raising new critical perspectives that provoke re-evaluation of existing models and, beyond this, pose different research questions for early childhood education and development researchers.

Concerning the second selected discussion about how to conceptualize the dynamic relation between an active and developing subject and the social contexts of development, this issue often turn our attention to the everyday life of children and their caregivers. Our section is rich in examples of this, in empirical studies and in theoretical formulations. The challenge appears especially central to cultural historical and related approaches engaging in conceptual development concerning dialectics. Central authors within this development and represented in the section are Jonathan Tudge (e.g. 2008) and Mariane Hedegaard (e.g. 2012), turning methodology towards new ways of observing children's activities and experiences in their everyday lives (see also Tudge & Hogan 2005) and new ways of exploring children's everyday lives across contexts (see also Hedegaard & Fleer 2013).

In continuation of this, Hedegaard contributes to changes in our approach to the concept of family and the tendencies to move from conceptualizing family as a quite isolated entity to exploring family life in its connections to other developmental contexts, as well as involving the child's own contribution to its developmental contexts. In this section, she elaborates this attention in an analysis of the cultural learning taking place, not just from parents to children, but as bidirectional and with the child as an active creator of their shared social situations. Tudge uses the theoretical framework of cultural-ecological theory (2008) to examine Brazilian families, parents' values and beliefs, and the ways in which parent-child interactions take place. Furthermore Liberali and Shimoura expand the cultural historical traditions in this section, focusing on the joint creation of "reading communities", where children learn and change themselves through taking part in transformative communities.

Concerning such dialectical formulations (as well as close observations of everyday interplay among small children and their parents), Hanne Haavind's study from 1987 has inspired researchers in Scandinavia and elsewhere through developmental concepts, focusing neither solely on the child nor on its surroundings, but exactly on development in-between relationship. Her research proposes concepts for analysing how the mutuality between child and caregivers is changing in specific ways.

It is for instance concepts dealing with an extended mutuality, involvement in new tasks and affairs, expanded responsibilities, new kinds of contributions and increasing motivation. Haavind also accentuates how development should not be seen as having one objective and one sequence, but must be understood as “exceeding processes”. It cannot be controlled or predicted, but we may point to *possibilities* for development (Haavind 1987, see also 2012).

In this section, Andenæs & Haavind follow up on the attention given to care for small children’s everyday life, with a focus on sharing early care and “chains of care”. In continuation of the discussion in this introduction, it is stressed how just “setting the caregiver in plural” provokes key concepts related to development: generating “conceptual and theoretical challenges to grasping the connection between care and development” (this section).

Returning to the problematic tendencies about moving back and forth between essentialist and relational understandings, one of the authors in this section formulated a breakthrough in relation to exploring how children are *positioned* as (gendered) children in a historical and discursive social practice. Bronwyn Davies illustrated in her *Frogs and snails and Feminist Tales* (1989), how children become persons through learning the discursive practices in which all people are positioned as either male or female. In her way of listening to the children and acknowledging their perspectives on gender, she not only introduced a new analytical practice related to poststructuralist theory, but also illustrated new scientific practices involving children in the research (Davies 1993).

This presents conceptualizations of *social dynamics* between persons and represents an alternative to the short-circuit about universal essence beyond historical and cultural interplay. Exactly this problem has been central in relation to historical endeavours to develop a scientific approach to exploring children, their learning and developmental processes and their specific positions in a changing world (a critique and discussion which has a long tradition especially in the cultural historical approaches). In this section, Davies provides a philosophical analysis of the concept of community, involving some of the latest theoretical discussions in this field - among other things about how material matters are part of the human interplay and about how persons, nature, things (‘non-human participants’) and communities “affect” one another and emerge through their meetings. In this discussion, doing/becoming community come into focus, in contrast to ideas about stable homogeneous entities: communities become emergent in ongoing encounters among co-existing multiplicities.

Looking at the other chapters, one can identify parallels, for instance in a discussion of changing

focus from differentiating between children and categorizing their difficulties in abstract ways (and seen from the adults' conflicting perspectives), and instead "listen" to the dynamics in the interplay between children and between their adults (Højholt & Kousholt, this section). Moreover, several chapters touch on the way that not only the children develop through taking part in the ongoing changes of social communities, but also the communities develop through different contributions to the common social practice. In Bronwyn Davies' formulation, this is connected to our ability to conceptualize community in an open way, acknowledging the very intra-actioning. This focus on social dynamics, in contrast to abstract essence, is at stake in discussions about gender, diagnosing and categorizing children and assessing children's learning, development and personalities. In this section it is especially contributing to discussions about "community" and Liberali and Shimoura present a concrete analysis of a project in Brazil in which the researchers, in collaboration with students, teachers, parents, principals, caretakers and children, work with "creatively enhancing community transformation" (Liberali & Shimoura, this section).

Changing perspectives on Child, Families and Communities

The theoretical problems and challenges touched upon above are connected, interact and criss-cross the different chapters in this section, where the researchers deal with them in different ways. Thus, we hope to illustrate differences as well as general questions emerging from our common matter. The concepts of "child", "families" and "communities" vary in different conceptual frameworks and in different historical contexts. The concepts cannot be seen in isolation from one another and must be seen in the light of historical changes, global differences and conflicts and political discussions about the same.

In a very general sense, critical researchers and practitioners seem to pay attention to the "child" in a way changing from a kind of an exceptional being on its way to *becoming* a real person due to developmental processes characterized by special logics and regularities – to different kinds of approaches to children as persons with agency and different perspectives on the daily life they share with each other and with their adults. For a long time, there has been fundamental critique of several developmental models referring to their abstract standardizations, their ways of detaching analyses from the children's life contexts and not including the subjectivity and social participation that mediate persons in development. This was mostly expressed as a critique of developmental studies and not followed by specific contextual empirical studies. Indeed, this section illustrates that a period of critique has been followed up by a multiplicity of empirical as well as theoretical studies. Still the field is quite empirical, but the new studies are building on the theoretical critique and developing

new modes of conducting research, developing contextual understandings, connecting theoretical strands and going beyond different disciplines and methodologies. Also the empirical studies involve children as subjects in new ways, and they involve the many other subjects engaged in children's everyday life, learning and development. The focus on a child taking part in a common world, opens up for involving societal analyses, structural and structuring dynamics as well as analyses of situated interplay between children.

Such changes should not be simplified, but seen in their variations around the world and in connection with how the different concepts and understandings have significances for one another, and for the practices we organise for children to live and learn through (e.g. "children's perspectives" are of particular concern in Scandinavian countries cf. Hedegaard et al 2012). New conceptualizations about the "child" point to new attentions, for instance to children's possibilities for taking part in relevant communities of their lives, children's contributions to the relations they are part of and children's influence on their everyday life. Such conceptualizations raise political as well as pedagogical questions about *unequal* developmental conditions, how to explore the personal *meanings* of this and how to work explicitly with *conditions* for learning and developing as a person in a particular context. In addition these attentions entail new ways of understanding social problems, taking into account how categories from developmental psychology evolve in relation to and have consequences for specific possibilities for investigating and dealing with problems linked to early childhood education. For instance we come to study situated meanings for children's participation in school instead of focusing isolated on their social background and a intergenerational transmission of problems (Højholt 2015).

Thus, instead of universal standardizations psychological research should inspire caregivers to concrete kinds of exploration of situations in children's life and deliver concepts for being curious about children's perspectives on what is at stake in their everyday life. In relation to work for developmental conditions the attention could be turned in direction of the importance of giving the children experiences of contributing to communities and being *influential* in relation to what matters to them.

Furthermore, the theoretical discussions of these concepts have consequences not just for the research questions we raise in our projects, but certainly also for the way we explore the questions and the ways we involve children in the research. The chapters in the section present different ways of paying attention to children's everyday life, to social complexities and to the endeavours of focusing on "connectedness" instead of separating and isolating different aspects of children's life and development in abstract ways. This points to including for instance the other children', the involved adults and the structural arrangements of children's situations and it implies to analyse how

actions are connected to conditions, meanings to the participants and how these may form *reasons for actions*.

Children's lives and conditions look very different in different parts of the world and so do their families. The concept of family seems almost as much of a key concept as the "child" in discussions about early childhood education. Even though the very focus on family has been criticized, the use of the concept does not decrease. Nevertheless, conceptualizations and explorations of different ways of living family life and performing care for children seem quite revolutionized. As illustrated in the section, this implies the ways the family is investigated as a compound community, where different participants with different lives across other contexts and with different perspectives and contributions, make up the conditions for each other.

Moreover, it concerns the way the family is explored in connection with other societal institutions and global structures, constituting conditions for being parents, exercising care and cooperating with other caregivers. Parental tasks are undergoing changes and are being under new kinds of pressure. Parental collaboration comes into the focus as a central issue to investigate and to strengthen. Exactly the collaboration between the various care-takers seem to be troubled by conflicts (e.g. about when something is a problem, about what is the right way of being a parent or about whether to give priority to the work of supporting child communities) and by displacements of responsibility between the involved parties. A recognizable example could be the way problems in schools are often formulated as caused by problems in the families of the children.

Opening up for acknowledging the plurality of perspectives on children's lives, development and education paves the way for new ways of understanding the conflicts about the "right" way of giving care and for exploring the different educational perspectives and practices around the world. Our way of thinking about what should be the best for children is at one and the same time connected to intimate and local cultures, to broader historical movements and to structural distributions of tasks, responsibilities, positions and power.

The concept of community has been criticized for overlooking such social differences, alluding to something harmonious, homogeneous, static, and in this way for being imbued with ideological components. In relation to this critique, a point of departure in 'community' may have excluding and preserving significations. Still, the concept is also part of theoretical movements aimed at analysing the ways persons constitute the conditions for each other, the ways persons are connected in structuring interplay and the ways participants are connected through their different relations to common matters. In other words: Community becomes connected to emergence in ongoing encounters and individual agency is to be found in the emergent and multiple encounters through which communities are established and maintained.

The concept seems to be used to prompt restrictions and adjustments as well as to attempts for analysing social interplay and opening up for democratic development in the educative practices for children. These contradictions call for theoretical investigations and discussions and the section is a contribution to that. To me the concept of community goes up against individualism - especially the individualization of developmental problems as something a child “has” or “has not”. To understand developmental problems we have to involve the communities of the social practices where children live and take part – and sometimes find themselves in problematic situations in relation to. In this way the concept might be central to the point that the behaviour of a child must be understood in the light of what the child is participating in - what is at stake here and what kind of situated conditions do the child find for taking part? This seems to be a quite obvious point which nevertheless is missing in many descriptions of children.

Thus, such perspectives on child, families and community and their conceptual refractions lead to a manifold area of research as presented in this section. They raise general questions such as: How do different parties in different contexts think about children’s development? What do they do in relation to promoting children’s development and well-being? How do they cooperate about their different contributions and what kind of conflicts do they encounter?

The contributions of the children are particularly accentuated: How do children act in their life? How do they act together with others creating conditions and influencing the social situation of their life? Moreover, how do they organize their activities, arrange relations and communities and challenge their caregivers?

The composition of the section

In this last section of the introduction main points, contexts and particular concerns from each of the chapters in the section will be presented - in the sequence they appear in the section. As mentioned the very combination of the terms child, families and communities at one and the same time challenges and illustrates current movements in our understandings and explorations of questions and problems associated with early child education. The section begins with this concern. Setting developmental contexts and caregivers in plural and involving situated social dynamics as well as historical societal structures, discourses and constructions; encounters traditional theoretical concepts and the societal way of organizing early child education. Andenæs & Haavind formulate that the issues evoked by the sharing of care go to the core of the discussion of the interrelatedness of care and development.

With this point of reference, Andenæs & Haavind state that instead of drawing on prevailing

psychological models and standards to assess the quality of arrangements of caring during early childhood, they will learn from how caregivers go about in their everyday practice. What characterizes the everyday life that parents of small children organize, and in what ways do practices of shared care unfold around their toddlers and involve them as social participants? How are relationships between parents and other care providers negotiated, and how is responsibility for the cyclical regulation shared? The chapter offers insights into three different selected cases: a family that moved from a country in the Middle East to Norway and started sending their young son to child care; a family with a girl suffering from asthma; and a same-gendered family (both females). The latter has been selected because same gendered parents seem to share the care to a higher degree than other couples and can thereby elucidate what intensive parental sharing may look like.

Then we change continent, turning to how Tudge, Martins, Merçon-Vargas, Dellazzana-Zanon, and Piccinini discuss child-rearing values and practices in Brazil. In their chapter, they illustrate how to use a theoretical framework that requires attention to four interrelated aspects: the cultural context, in particular cultural values and practices; how those values and practices change over historical time; the influence of individual variability; and, most importantly, the typically occurring activities and interactions in which children engage with those who are trying to raise them. A dialectical point here is that the next generation never simply copies, but appropriates what has been done or valued before. Cultural-ecological theory, therefore, requires that one attends to the impact of historical time on changes in values, beliefs, and practices. In their chapter, the authors present work by Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller, focusing on child-rearing approaches linked with autonomy and relatedness in the majority world and plenty of data collected in Brazil, discussing families and their child-rearing strategies in different parts of the country, including local and class variations in child rearing.

In Mariane Hedegaard's "Children's cultural learning in everyday family life exemplified at the dinner setting", we prolong this attention, zooming in on the *social situations* of a dinner table. This implicates approaching learning, not only as resulting in a person's acquisition of new competences, but also of values leading to new motive-orientations and new positions in concrete activity settings. In this chapter, this is conceptualized as "cultural learning", taking place in families through parents' and children's negotiation of demands in concrete activity settings, and leading to new forms of social interaction between children and parents, as well as to new initiatives and conflicts. Therefore, this learning process goes both from parent to children and from children to parents. These points are illustrated with examples from a project on children's everyday lives in the family in Denmark. The examples focus on Emil and Martin, two boys in two different families. Emil and Martin had just started in school and this resulted in fundamental changes in their daily activities at home. The

children's transitions to school are chosen to illustrate how this changes the demands a child experiences at home, and thereby affect the child's motive orientation, and the demands a child puts on his home surroundings, and thereby influences his development.

Another example of how different learning practices influence one another is Doner's chapter about how the ongoing processes of globalisation through new educational regimes affect parenting among the middle class in India. Henrike Doner argues that early childhood education becomes a prime site, where neoliberal values are reproduced and enacted in relation to new government agendas and economic conditions, in terms of competition and the imagery of global markets in education and employment and directed towards future upward mobility for the family. An emphasis on education and the institutions, ideologies and practices related to becoming an educated person, are among the accepted markers of middle-class identities across the globe, and education does not just affect the child involved. It also shapes those around him or her and how they relate to the wider world. On the basis of two decades of extensive periods of long-term anthropological fieldwork in Calcutta/Kolkata, India, it is discussed how the production of global Indian citizens starts with preschool education, a novel and spreading practice that is changing the roles of the family members, and especially the role of mothers.

Conceptual significances of neoliberal movements are also problematized in the next chapter. In her "Children and community", Bronwyn Davies discusses the very nature of community as a concept and a practice. The first half of the chapter is an elaboration of the philosophical concepts to re-think community and the second half of the chapter turns to detailed stories of children in one particular community, a Reggio-Emilia-inspired pre-school in Sweden. The author attends to these stories in minute detail, in their materiality, in their affect and emotion, in order to make visible the mobility of intra-action. In this way, it is illustrated how the presented concepts enable us to think not only about community, but to focus in particular on the work the children are making to accomplish the ongoing life of a community. Through these elaborations, we obtain a concept of community not as a finite group of people, but as a way of mattering, a way of engaging with the world, and of re-configuring that world as a place where self and other make a difference, both to each other and with each other. As an extension of this, the power of a community to endure comes from multiplicity, from encounters, from an always-emergent openness to the not-yet-known. In this way, our capacity to enter into composition with others both enhances our specificity and expands our capacity for thought and for action.

The engagement in evolving creativity is at stake in the next chapter as well. In their "The Learn through Playing Project: creatively enhancing community transformation", Liberali & Shimoura

involve us in an extraordinary developmental project in a context where many Brazilian children, parents, teachers, principals and even teacher educators and researchers feel deprived of the possibility of creating conditions for a better future. With a point of departure in transformative thoughts from Freire, Vygotsky and Bakhtin, the authors take us into the dialogues and inner connections of collaboration, where individuals learn and change themselves through taking part in transformative communities. The project has focused on the development of reading as a general aim - elaborating the objective to promote reading communities through activities for sharing reading. In this way, the project opens new possibilities of seeing reading not as an individual practice but as a way of transforming community realities. Performance, as a kind of support, enabled the kids to go beyond their familiar perceptions and possibilities and gave them a chance to see themselves as active agents in the construction of the reading community. Liberali and Shimoura are engaged with the actual dialogue and argumentation between interlocutors and illustrate how changes in collective meaning stem from the struggle established between different subjective experiences. In this sense, the general interest of the group is created through the debate generated by the conflict of ideas.

Conflicts and communities are also the subject of the next chapter, which focuses on children's development of agency across different and conflictual communities (families, schools, institutions for children's leisure time and special help arrangements in Denmark). Højholt & Kousholt illuminate how different adults are connected in a structural distribution of responsibility in relation to children and have different perspectives on the development of children. On this background, it is discussed how social conflicts around and between children may constitute problematic developmental conditions and form a basis for personal conflicts *for* the children - related to a plurality of engagements. This gives a certain view on how the social background of the children seems to have situated meanings in the interplay between their different life contexts. Through examples about the children's internal coordination, the authors want to illustrate how children develop possibilities for conducting their life, not just through adjusting to given conditions, but also through arranging conditions together with others, contributing to social practice and taking part in negotiations about different matters in their life. A specific example about a boy's personal dilemmas illustrates how children's developmental processes cannot be understood in isolation from social conflicts about them. The aim, therefore, is to develop analytical concepts to be used for exploring children's ordinary life as a background for understanding specific difficulties.

To end where we started: In the deconstruction of developmental psychology, the theoretical critique as well as new ways of thinking theoretically, we now have the chance to gain an insight into new

concepts in Erica Burman's "Towards a post-human developmental psychology of child, families and communities". This chapter elaborates the rationale for posthuman approaches to early childhood education and raises new research questions for development researchers. Taking in turn the key terms, "child", "families" and "communities", the chapter indicates how frameworks associated with the post-human, both critique the formulation of their relations and generate new conceptual and methodological agendas. This also raises questions about sciences and the application of science. Among other points, it turns the focus from generalisation, standardisation and universality to specificity, particularity and contingency and calls for engaged scholarship, where ethics (with formulations of Badiou) become more than "pity for the victims" - rather it should become the enduring maxim. Beyond static rationalist models of reflexivity, the affective turn promises to support politically engaged and innovative research that attends to the apparently minor or insignificant, the fleeting and the non, or less rational, in research relations and accounting practices.

Going through these themes, points and questions, I hope to have aroused curiosity and desire for reading further and I wish the readers pleasant and inspiring moments with this section.

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Sharing early care: Learning from practitioners

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Abstract *Shared care* and *chain of care* are core concepts for analyzing empirical variation of care arrangements for small children, involving more than one care-giver. The Norwegian context exemplifies an increased tendency among mothers to share the care of their young child with a co-parent at home, and with professional care providers at day care centers. Instead of drawing on prevailing psychological models and standards to assess the quality of arrangements of care during early childhood, we have tried to learn from how caregivers go about in their practice. In this respect we count parents as well as care providers in child care centers as *practitioners*. Based upon parents' detailed descriptions of their children's everyday life, the paper analyses how parents involve others in the chain of care that they organize. Three cases of sharing are presented and discussed: Same gendered parents who demonstrate intensive parental sharing, parents who share with professional caregivers at day care, and parents of children with special needs who do the same. Setting up care arrangements with more than one continuously engaged participant appeared as a process of *gradual adaptation*, not a sudden abdication from parental responsibility. Thus, the child is neither constructed as a baton in a relay race, delivered from one caregiver to the next, nor as a task that is easily split into pieces, one for each caregiver. Different caregivers did not necessarily treat the child in exactly the same way, but they coordinated their efforts in order to contribute to the subjectification and development of this particular little person.

Introducing shared care

Theoretical models about early child development draw heavily on assumptions about attachment in the mother-child dyad, stressing the child's dependency on one particular person with the ability to read signs and satisfy needs (see for example Bowlby, 1988). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that everyday practices of sharing care for a child will raise many concerns, particularly if beginning from an early age. It is as if the notion of more than one person in a baby's life could easily turn into 'too many': that the babies might encounter shifting caregivers who do not really care that much about them, or that they will not be able to differentiate between persons and will fall short of the standards for being securely attached (Haavind, 2011).

In the socio-cultural context that we will present to the readers – the Scandinavian countries - there is a growing tendency for children to stay connected to more than one caregiver from an early age. Since both the male and female parents are entitled to take paid leave from work to care for their newborns, mothers and fathers may actually take turns in staying at home and care for their baby for some period during the first year (Ellingsæter, 2009). When the babies become toddlers, their parents may take them to low cost and high quality child care centers where professional caregivers will daily enter into the lives of the young children (Ellingsæter & Gulbrandsen, 2007). Arrangements for the sharing of care in its many versions are changing the premises for creating the early years of childhood for particular children. This generates conceptual and theoretical challenges to grasping the connection between care and development (Andenæs, 2005).

As might be expected, arrangement for sharing care could be interpreted both as being reassuring to small children and also as threatening to their well-being. We will bring the contested issues that the sharing of care evokes to the core of the discussion of the interrelatedness of care and development. Instead of drawing on prevailing psychological models and standards to assess the quality of arrangements of caring during early childhood, we have tried to learn from how caregivers go about in their practice. We will count parents as well as care providers in child care centres as practitioners in this respect. Instead of drawing on one-parent-care as the implicit norm for quality of care we have learned from the ways caregivers in shared care arrangements actually adapted their practices to the experiences they gathered as they went along with the children and each other during their first years of life (Andenæs, 2011). In doing so we will draw on a selection of studies from Norway, where the sharing of child care between both parents and professional caregivers in child care centers as well as between parents themselves is at stake.

Recent trends in the sharing of care in Norway

Increased sharing emerges in many different ways. First, there is an increasing tendency towards more sharing of care *between mothers and fathers*. The continuously engaged father with a capacity for tender care is no longer perceived as violating standards of masculinity (Haavind, 2006). This is not to say that all couples who live together will subscribe to a scheme of equal sharing of the caregiving chores, but the tendency towards sharing across gender will leave no one unaffected. Therefore, fathers will more often than not have to account for why they stay less involved than their female co-parents in early care. Box 1 gives an overview the Norwegian scheme for parental leave benefit.

Box 1: Arrangements for care during the baby's first year: Parental leave benefit

Coverage: Parental benefit is intended to ensure parents an income in connection with the birth of a child and during the first year of the child's life. For most people the coverage from the state corresponds to the ordinary salary of the parent who is on leave. There is an upper limit for the level of compensation from the state for some people with very high annual income. All employees in the public sector will be fully compensated.

Period: The total period for parental benefit in the case of a birth is 49 weeks if parents prefer to receive 100 percent coverage, or the period can be extended to 59 weeks if parents prefer 80 percent coverage.

Entitlement: Any parent claiming the right to parental leave benefits must have been in work or an activity deemed equivalent to work for six of the last ten months prior to the start of the leave. More than 80 per cent of the mothers and approximately 70 per cent of the fathers have the right to parental leave benefit. Mothers who do not have the right to parental leave benefit are entitled to a lump sum maternity grant. This lump sum will for most mothers correspond to a salary of about two months.

Shared period and maternal and paternal quota: The shared period is that part of the parental benefit that can be split between the parents as they wish. If the father is going to draw parental benefit for part or all of this period, the mother must be in paid work or an equivalent activity. The maternal quota is 14 weeks, and the first six weeks must be taken immediately following the birth, while the remaining eight weeks can be taken at any time during the parental benefit period. The paternal quota is that part of the parental benefit period that is reserved for fathers. A father can assume care of a child in 14 weeks on a 'use it or lose it' principle. The mother does not have to be in paid work or an equivalent activity during the father's paternal quota.

Public policies support sharing between the two parents in the sense that when paid parental leave in 1993 was expanded up to almost a year, there was space opened up for designing a father's quota (Brandth & Kvande, 2011). This quota for fathers is perceived by some as offering all three parties extended possibilities for realising new ideals of early parenting, and by others as a state intervention into the private zone of family life in a way that reduces the parental couple's freedom of choice and ignores their own understanding of the specific needs of their baby (Ellingsæter, 2012).

The new, engaged father figure does not just appear in circumstances in which mothers and fathers live together. In the wake of increasing numbers of mothers and fathers who have split up and live separately, there are increased efforts by both mothers and fathers to allow fathers more than mere visitation rights. A significant minority of ex-couples practise equal sharing between two separate homes ('joint physical custody'), and some of their children will from an early age be included in an arrangement that involves them moving back and forth on a regular basis every other week. Among the population at large, there is both strong support and prevailing skepticism about employing this as a cultural standard for best practices (Skjørten et al, 2007). What emerges as a contested issue is

that for some, the shared care arrangement is considered to be proof of a willingness to protect and maintain a close relationship to both parents, while for others, it raises concerns that the child's need for day-to-day stability and continuity may be violated, especially if small children are involved.

Second, sharing *between parents and professional caregivers of children attending day care* has increased for children under the age of three, and such arrangements now take place as a standard procedure, which marks a significant transition for the majority of small children in their second year of life. Quite recently, the long term goal of offering high quality and low price day care to all children on the verging of entering into their second year of life was reached (Statistics Norway, 2012). All types of parents take part, including parents with Norwegian and immigrant backgrounds, and parents from different social classes (Sæther, 2010). See box 2 for a brief presentation of the Norwegian day care centres.

Box 2: Arrangement for child care in child care centres

Provision: The state and the municipalities are entitled to offer affordable and high quality day care for children aged 0 – 5 years (they attend school from the year they turn six). Most municipalities are drawing on a combination of public day care centres and centres operated by private providers. In any case most of the expenses will be covered by the state, and the municipality must provide guidance and ensure that centers are operated in accordance with standards and rules for management.

Staffing: Head teachers and pedagogical leaders must be trained preschool teachers (three years university college education or equivalent education). There must be one pedagogical leader per 7 to 9 children under the age of three, and per 14 to 18 children over the age of three. Additional child care personnel without professional qualifications can be employed in order to reach the standard of one adult per three children under the age of three, and one adult per six children in the age between three and six.

Content: Child care centres shall lay a sound foundation for the children's development, life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society. According to the Nordic *educare* model, education and care should be entangled. Children and parents have a legal right to participation.

Payment: The parents' part of funding the total running costs varies from between approximately 22 and 30 per cent. There is a maximum fee of NOK 2330 (less than €300) per month. The rest is paid by the state and the municipalities.

Take-up: At present 90 % of all children 1-5 years, 97 % 3-5 years, and 80 % 1-2 years. There has been a rapid growth in attendance for the children in the youngest age group.

At present, child care is celebrated as being beneficial to all children from the age of three. The idea is that it allows children to be with other children so that they can play and enjoy outdoor life year round, and it is appropriate preparation for schooling. When it comes to the youngest children beyond the age of three, this remains a contested issue. On the one hand, public child care is viewed as being a universal measure of the welfare of both children and parents. On the other hand, there is concern that children around the age of one tend to be sensitive to separation, and also too young to really enjoy the company of other children their age (Ellingsæter, 2006). There is also a questioning about the motives – especially of mothers – for sending small children to day care. Because the decision to either ‘stay at home’ or to leave the child in the care of professionals designates her as the accountable parent, some will launch the suspicion that the availability of low cost child care and her wish to pursue her work and receive a full salary may cause her to ignore the needs of her child.

Third, arrangements for sharing care are called for and introduced in order to improve the life conditions for *children with special needs*. The improved quality of life for the majority of children in Norway has also led to an increased sensitivity towards children who, for a variety of reasons, suffer from disabilities or chronic illnesses, or who grow up in families where extraordinary stress or a shortage of resources may reduce the parents’ capacity to provide viable standards of caring. In such cases, there is a growing tendency to consider professional caregivers as having a central role in supporting parents. Whether this pertains to parents with extraordinary responsibilities or parents with limited capacities, the child care centre is supposed to relieve the parents – usually the mother – of some of the extraordinary burden, and thereby also strengthen her capacity to remain engaged. Here, the direction of public concern is turned around, and the claim may be that some children will need professional care in *addition to* parental care, because the care that is needed appears to be too burdensome or too complex to be solely the parents’ responsibility. The underlying assumption is that no one can beat the parents in how they tend to their vulnerable child, but doing so is particularly demanding for them. Shared care is about to become the standard arrangement for small children with special needs that follow from disabilities or developmental delays. Further, because attending child care is increasingly in accordance with what most small children actually do, the need to account for child care as a compensatory arrangement has just vaporised. Instead, non-parental child-care is seen as an arrangement for the early social integration of all kinds of small kids (Ellingsæter, 2014).

Following the contested issues raised by sharing

Shared care is increasing due to a set of different reasons and across different contexts, and we have pointed out how such arrangements may be highly valued as well as contested. What psychology offers in order to settle these issues is limited, in spite of for instance Bronfenbrenner's efforts to direct attention to investigations of relationships between settings, like the child care centre and family home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Following Singer (Singer, 1993), shared care will at best be ignored in psychological theories of early development because the pedagogic concept of family upbringing is based on the assumption that the mother will stay at home and represent continuity within the family. Ahnert, Rickert and Lamb (2000) have tried to find alternative expressions of the phenomena of sharing between parents and professionals, claiming that when a child attends out-of-home care, he or she is not cared for by non-maternal care providers *instead of* being cared for by a mother. What the child experiences should not be viewed as a replacement, but rather as regular turn-taking routines in which the children carry experiences across various places and therefore are received and supported by care providers in those places. Attachment to just one person does not tell the entire story, and there is a need to conceptualise the entire 'care ecology' (Ahnert et.al. 2000). Similar viewpoints are expressed by Højholt (2001) and Kousholt (2005) when they talk about parenting. According to these authors there is a need to develop ways of talking about and investigating parenting as a set of practices that are not exclusively conducted in the family home. Tending to a child may be based on direct face-to-face contact with the actual child, but pretty soon it will include some kind of awareness directed at him or her as a continuous being, even when the child is somewhere else with someone else (Højholt, 2001; Kousholt, 2008). 'Chain of care' (Gullestad, 1979; Andenæs, 2011) is a conceptual contribution to this understanding. The concept opens up for the inclusion of care providers, seen as 'links', in the chain, while it is still the personal obligation of the parents to ensure that each link as well as the total chain is good enough for their child.

The premises for emerging as accountable caregivers – mothers, fathers and professionals alike – are under transformation. As researchers, we can take advantage of this situation, by turning to the ways in which actual practitioners proceed. Surpassing the normative stance is not an easy and straightforward task for the caregivers, and increased awareness and more reflection will be the result. How do they arrange their everyday lives together with their small children, and how do they involve and draw on others in the sharing of care? Our strategy for developing concepts and models that to a larger degree resonate with the sharing that is actually taking place, is to explore the practices as well as reflections of the practitioners, of caregivers who actually do the sharing.

Studies of care through the routines of everyday life

In order to investigate shared care, as it is carried out by care practitioners, we have turned to several studies that address how small children are taken care of and live their everyday lives in Norway today. The main study followed 58 families from when the children were about six months of age until close to their third birthdays. During the period of the study, close to all of the children were enrolled in a child care centre, making it possible to investigate how child care became an element of their everyday lives. In addition to the initial variation according to social class and ethnicity, urban/rural positioning, different strategic samples were added as we became aware of other constellations relevant to the three trends in the sharing of care just described.

Our general theoretical approach is inspired by authors combining cultural psychology and developmental psychology (e.g. Bruner, 1990; Rogoff, 2003; Valsiner, 2006). According to these perspectives and the arguments presented thus far, the empirical data required to address our research questions are practices of daily life both as contextualised interaction and as they are experienced by the participants themselves. In order to obtain the broad spectrum of social events that take place during a day, interviews with the parents consisted of detailed reports of how the care for each child was organised in time and space. To capture the entire day for those children who had begun attending child care, we even interviewed the children's preschool teachers to get their descriptions and reflections.

To ensure that we acquired the necessary standard information about current care arrangement and plans for the future, the interviews started with a series of questions about these issues. Still, the main element of the interview setting was the 'life mode interview' (Haavind, 1987), in which the interviewees are encouraged to describe their day episode by episode with regard to the social interactions in which each caregiver and child participated. The interviewer organises the conversation around the preceding day in order to ensure a close association between the interviewee's detailed descriptions of episodes involving the child, and their subsequent interpretations and reflections. 'Yesterday' is used as the point of departure, and the description of each episode is used as a basis for further inquiry with question to capture routines as well as exceptions, and how the current practices have developed. As we verbally move through the day, the parents are repeatedly encouraged to provide accounts of their own practices, aims and efforts in their interactions with their child, and of their interpretations of the aims and efforts of others. Instead of asking general questions about pa-

rental experiences, worries and expectations, each of the accounts is thus contextualised in relation to specific episodes, and each episode is accorded a distinct place in the day's stream of events.

When parents are invited to describe their experiences from living with their children, their emotional regulations and reflective stances and belief systems will also follow. The description of each episode could therefore be used for further inquiry into what each parent was up against and what he/she was trying to accomplish.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Our overarching question in the analysis of the empirical material has been what characterises the everyday life that parents of small children organise and in what ways do practices of shared care unfold around their toddlers and involve them as social participants? More detailed questions include the following: In what ways do arrangements of shared care create both developmental challenges and support for children who encounter a set of caregivers across different times and places? What notions about their small child as dependent on involvement and support from caregivers do the parents draw on in concurrent episodes with their child? How are relationships between parents and other care providers negotiated, and how is responsibility for the cyclical regulation shared?

The presentation that follows is based mainly on three children and their care arrangements, representing the three main tendencies of increased sharing, in this sequence: 1) between parents and professional caregivers in 'ordinary' families, 2) between professional caregivers and parents in families with vulnerable children in need of increased care, and 3) between mothers and fathers.

I: New places and new people: The sharing of care between parents and professional caregivers

Adam was 14 months old when he was enrolled in a child care centre, and his family is among the 58 families who have participated in the main study. His parents moved from a country in the Middle East to Norway a few years before Adam was born, and they have experienced what it is like being immigrants without the cultural knowledge that most ethnic Norwegians take for granted. It has been suggested that studies of immigrant families are generally well-suited for advancing knowledge about how dynamic societal and cultural processes are intertwined with familial processes (Chuang & Gielden, 2009), and thus useful for our purpose here, exploring sharing of care between parents and professional caregivers.

Based on trust

The first task for parents is to decide the right time for enrollment, and then to pre-check the quality of the potential care arrangement. Adam's parents were eager to find a place at a child care centre for Adam when he gotten passed 9 months, but did not succeed until 5 months later. They were firm in their choice, that is, to send Adam to a child care centre and not a private child minder, and were in this respect in line with the general trend in Norway, as a child care centre is at the top of most parents' preference hierarchy regarding non-parental care (Ellingsæter & Gulbrandsen, 2007). 'We would never dream of hanging up a piece of paper at the local store to search for a child minder and then just leave him with this stranger', they said, and thereby underlining that confidence is what counts. 'You can trust a day care centre in a totally different way than a private child minder.'

Both parents have high expectations of the day care centre. There he will get 'the language and all the rest', as the father says in the interview. And they look forward to him socialising with other children his age. This is actually what most parents in Norway seem to emphasise when they consider non-parental care. What counts is that one's child is taken care of by friendly people who possess knowledge about children, and the opportunities given to enjoy social life with other children (Østrem et al, 2009).

Gradual adaptation

The transition from staying home with one's parents the entire day to spending 6-9 hours each day at a child care centre with unfamiliar care providers is gradual. Most employees in Norway are entitled to three days off when their child starts attending day care, and child care centres expect parents to spend time in assisting their child in becoming familiar with the new place and settling down. Adam's child care centre had a rather detailed adaptation program with explicit rules for the introductory days. It started with a short visit on the first day, included a light meal, and one or both parents were expected to be there the entire time. Then the stay at the child care centre was gradually prolonged, and the parents were asked to stay away for an increasingly longer period. See box 3 for a presentation of an adaptation program.

Box 3: An example of an adaptation program

Day 1	A short visit accompanied by the parents. A light meal.
Day 2	Parents are encouraged to leave and stay away for a short while (10-60 minutes)
Day 3	Similar to day 2, and include a short nap for the child. Parents should be present when the child wakes up.
Day 4	Similar to regular days, but much shorter.
Day 5	Similar to regular days, but shorter.

Adam's preschool teacher recalls Adam's start-up as quite unproblematic, though she adds that this should not be taken for granted. Quite often she has to convince parents who find it hard to follow the plan that this procedure is actually what makes for the smoothest start-up. Even Adam's mother initially found it hard to leave her child with other people. Yet she felt so welcome and, in addition to Adam's easy adaptation process, this is what really mattered to her.

Direct and indirect monitoring and support

Even after the introductory phase, it was continuous work for Adam's parents to ensure that their child is taken good care of at the child care centre. Key elements in their *caring from a distance* was to keep themselves informed about his life when he is out of their sight, and to do what they could to secure his well-being. They take active part in what goes on at the child care center, and according to the preschool teacher, his mother in particular is the kind of person who never rushes but takes her time and reads all kinds of information. 'And they both ask a lot of questions', she adds. Another source of information about Adam's life when he is out of his parents' sight is a continuous interpretation of what has been referred to as *signs of care* (Thorne, 2000). When the sandwiches that were packed for Adam in the morning have not been eaten or his diaper is very heavy at pick-up-time, it is interpreted as a sign indicating that everything is not exactly as it ought to be. When such things occur, they present their concerns in the gentlest possible way, without accusing any particular person. What is also at stake is the maintenance of a relationship of cooperation, which is not driven by the customer-salesperson relationship as underlying logic. They want to appear as reasonable persons in the mind of the other caregiver, and there were no indications in the interview with the preschool teacher, that they had not succeeded so far.

The close contact and effort to keep themselves informed about daily life at the child care centre serves another purpose as well, namely to assist Adam in making connections between the two settings, that is, the child care centre itself and the family home, by talking about the centre at home,

and by facilitating the caretakers' conversations with Adam about home life during child care hours. Actually, this kind of talk seems to be more frequent at Norwegian dinner tables than for instance in US (Aukrust, 2002). Adam is even encouraged to be the one who transfers information and habits between home and child care, like when his parents satisfy his expressed wishes for 'canned mackerel in tomato sauce'. This typical Norwegian sandwich spread is strange to Adam's parents, but nevertheless it has been included in their groceries at home. Through practices like these, they acknowledge the child care centre as a place for respect and belonging and part of the life that family members share.

Installing the child in the mind of the other – to a certain degree

A crucial way of performing care from a distance goes through the personnel at the day care centre. As Adam's verbal capacity is limited, his parents keep close contact with them. The parents try to inform them about Adam and the rest of his everyday life, thus increasing the caregivers' sensitivity towards him and making it easier for them to understand him. At the same time, the parents are well aware that Adam is not the only child at the child care centre. Expectations must be realistic, and they do not want to be interpreted as being too demanding.

The efforts of Adam's parents underlines the notion that the task of taking care of the child cannot be conceptualised as being shared among *equal* partners, which could be a possible interpretation of the previously introduced term 'shared care' (Singer, 1993). The parents regard it as their responsibility to see that he lives a good life, and that he receives good care even when they are not together. They are receptive to feedback and ideas related to their child, and appreciate suggestions pertaining to age-adjusted demands, as well as feedback about how Adam's language skills are developing. They do not interpret such feedback and suggestions as criticism, but more as a way of supporting them in their task of taking care of Adam.

There are only a few things that they are not entirely happy about. They would have preferred some stricter rules, for instance an absolute prohibition against eating sand. They have witnessed children eating sand outdoors, and it worries them that it has not been stopped more effectively. Yet they are not really worried or upset. To them, the child care centre is a place for Adam to be one of the kids, and their relational expectations seem to pertain to establishing a relationship between their child and the caregiver, that is gradually transformed from positing the caregiver as a stranger to a friendly

acquaintance. Adam is doing fine, and his parents do not expect these persons to have the same emotional relationship to Adam as they have themselves.

II: Support and relief: Sharing of care between professional caregivers and parents of children with special needs

The next case of sharing is between professional caregivers at child care centres and parents of children with special needs, and our strategic choice has been parents living with children suffering from asthma. Parents in this group are considered to be fully competent, but they need some relief from their care work, and child care is meant to support and strengthen their parenting. Asthma is a disease that accentuates the *cyclical* and *individualised* character of care work. It has a fluctuating course, and is worst during the night, which implies a chronic lack of sleep for the children as well as for the parents. What happens at one point of the day travels to other parts of the day, and good sleeping routines are extremely important in order to keep the asthma symptoms in check. The individual mechanisms and appearance of asthma makes it crucial to know how the disease affects the particular child, and calls for continuous observation and follow-up.

The sample of the asthma study (Reve, 2008), which is a substudy of the main project, consists of six families with a child between 11 months and 3 years with a diagnosis of moderate to serious asthma. All of the children attended day care, except the youngest one who had not started yet, but her parents had child care experience from an older child who also suffered from asthma. According to the parents, the medical specialists had encouraged them to use child care, and from an early age. The medical doctors know very well that being parents of children with asthma is hard work, 24 hours a day, and they need support and relief. Therefore, they recommend child care, in spite of possible risks from the physical environment and infectious diseases. The parents in all the six families had experienced how difficult it was to engage participants in their network to mind the child. Relatives and friends hesitated to offer their assistance because they were afraid of possible asthma attacks while they were in charge. With this as the background, day care appeared to serve as an important relief. This is especially true for the mothers, who had the main responsibility in most of the families. This was the case in Nora's family, and Nora's mother had reduced her working hours outside the family because of the extended task of taking care of their child. What needs to happen for parents like Nora's to experience sharing as a means of support and relief, and how do these parents proceed in making the arrangement of shared care meet their quality standards of care for their vulnerable child?

Matching the needs of the child with the capacity of the caretakers

Parents of all types of children are concerned about the quality of care when they leave their child with another caregiver, but there is even more at stake with vulnerable children, like children with asthma, who may be seriously ill if they do not receive follow-up according to their condition. Like all of the children in the asthma sample, Nora needs the correct type and exact quantity of medication, for use as a preventive measure as well as treatment during asthma attacks. When she was enrolled in day care, her mother could not take for granted that the caregivers had the relevant competence to care for her properly, and therefore took on the responsibility to furnish them with a minimum of necessary knowledge, based on the kind of knowledge that she herself had acquired during the period that she had spent close to her child.

At the point of the interview, Nora's parents are happy about the quality of the child care. However, they had had some bad experiences from the first child care centre Nora attended because the care providers did not realise how serious Nora's asthma really was. Her mother illustrates with an example:

One day they had taken all the children to a farm, without bringing the inhaler. It was too clumsy to carry, they told me afterwards. I was really shocked.

She was even more shocked by their further explanation. They had been up to the same farm earlier, with another child suffering from asthma, and on that occasion it had not been necessary to bring the inhaler. So why bother this time?

That is exactly what I have tried to emphasise; that children with asthma are different, and what worked for the former child with asthma would not necessarily work for Nora.

In the eyes of Nora's mother, this lack of individual adaptation revealed their ignorance about asthma. After another similar episode, Nora's parents hardly made use of the centre, and as soon as they were offered a place at another child care centre, they moved Nora there. In contrast to families like Adam's, it was impossible for them to just wait and give it another chance.

At the next child care center, they were met by nice and open minded people who had a totally different attitude. What really made the difference for the parents was the caregivers' willingness to join Nora's parents at a one day workshop at the regional centre for children with asthma. The knowledge gained from the workshop was communicated to the rest of the staff, and soon everybody knew how

to administer the medicine, which was an effort that Nora's parents really appreciated. The preschool teacher on her end speaks about how they struggled in the beginning to recognise and interpret Nora's signs. They had no experience with asthma, and were anxious about the possibility that they would not recognise it when an asthma attack was in progress. Getting to know Nora took some time, according to the preschool teacher, and she reflected upon the new demands on them as day care workers. More observation and more discussion among those working at the day care centre and a much closer cooperation with the parents was absolutely essential. They had to phone Nora's mother, to call upon her expertise in interpreting Nora's signs with questions like 'Does this mean that Nora is tired? Perhaps she didn't sleep well last night? Does she need more medicine?' By paying close attention, and broadening the scope by including Nora's family hours, they gradually increased their skills in interpreting what might possibly be signs of an attack in progress and finding more effective ways of preventing such attacks.

Negotiating relationships and the focus of attention

Even though day care represents an important means of relief for families with children suffering from asthma, there is no doubt that the parents remain the primary responsible caregivers. Still, to a greater degree than the parents of Adam and other non-sufferers, these parents try to gently push the relationship in a direction where they assist each other in interpreting the signs of specific situations. To a greater extent than what was the case with Adam, it is crucially important not to lose sight of the big picture, all 24 hours of the day, as the shared focus. Sleep may serve as an example. At Nora's child care centre, they were flexible with the sleeping regime and adjusted the routines to Nora's fluctuating needs, as related by her parents in the morning. According to the other families that had children with asthma, this was not always the case. Sleep was a potential field of tension between the parents and care providers, because of the different areas of focus. Parents were generally concerned about their child's health conditions, and wanted any health-related information pertaining to their child's stay at the child care centre. They feel responsible for keeping the asthma as mild as possible, in order to both prevent the child's suffering, and to facilitate sleep for everybody in the coming night. The child care personnel directed their attention towards the educational program, with elements like language development and self-confidence building, based on their views on what the child needs and what the child may get from them. The less insight they had into sleepless nights in the family, the more tension sprung up between parents and child care personnel. In Nora's case, however, the parents and the day care workers gradually assisted each other in interpret-

ing signs of care, and reached a level where both parts understood particular episodes within the framework of daily routines and Nora's individuality. A continuous exchange of specific and contextualised information was crucial, and Nora's parents have gradually experienced the child care centre as a supportive and co-operating partner.

III: Towards joint responsibility: Sharing of care between parents

Our strategic choice when it comes to shedding light on the tendency toward increased sharing between mothers and fathers, has been same-gendered couples (both females) living with small children. Even though the partners belong to the same gender category, there are biological differences related to reproduction; only one of them has given birth to the child and is capable of breastfeeding the child. What makes them useful for our purpose here is that, according to a number of studies, same gendered parents share more than other couples (Patterson, Sutfin & Fulchet, 2004; Doucet & Dunne, 2000), and elucidates what intensive parental sharing may look like. The sample of the study (Finsæther, 2009) consists of six same-gendered couples, all female, with a child below 3 years of age. Our question is how do the parents in these same-gendered families proceed when they develop their parenthood and share the care for a young child, and how do they handle the differences as they proceed? These parents, like all the other parents interviewed, share care with a child care centre, but this aspect is not a main issue in analysing their sharing.

Constructing two equal caregivers and a balanced relationship

When conducting the individual interviews with the biological mother and her co-mother, the immediate impression was that both parents gave rich and detailed descriptions of their everyday life, and descriptions, reflections and evaluative statements that were very similar. This impression was supported and deepened when analysing the interviews in a systematic way: The task of taking care of the child was central in their everyday life, and it was presented as a shared project to create an equal, balanced parenthood. This was achieved by reducing the meaning of biological differences, and at the same time establishing co-mother as a mother who is equal to the birth-mother.

An aspect of biology that has to be handled in both same-gendered and opposite-gendered couples is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is highly valued in Norway (Ellingsæter, 2010), and in opposite-

gendered families, the mothers' capacity to breastfeed is often used as an explanation for why the mother's share of the parental leave is so much greater than the father's – and even greater than the couple's expressed ideal of gender equality (Ellingsæter, 2010). When breastfeeding was practised in the same-gendered families, there was a mutual awareness to not interpret it as a capacity that reduces the co-mother to a second-best parent. Furthermore, breastfeeding during the night should not automatically be connected to other child-related nightly tasks, which was often the practice of opposite-gendered couples in the main study (Meling, 2007). And on the symbolic level, they insisted on a mother name for both, as a signal to the world that this child really has two mothers. A typical solution was 'mum' for the biological mother and 'mother' for the co-mother.

In Gro's family, like in most of the same-gendered families, only the biological mother was entitled to paid parental leave. None of the benefit could be taken by the co-mother, and accordingly, the couple did not receive the same economic incentive to share as other parents at that time.¹ Nevertheless, the co-mother decided to reduce her working hours in order to stay at home with her partner and infant one day a week, with no economic compensation. In order to actively take part from the very beginning of Gro's life, she paid the parental leave out of her own pocket. She was also very active on the weekends and before and after work and very supportive towards her partner during this initial period. She took care of the infant, and she cooked, and thereby made it possible for her partner to get some sleep during the daytime. The biological mother described how happy she was about the arrangement, and emphasised her pleasure when observing the close relationship that was developing between Gro and her co-mother, thanks to these practices.

Gradually, both mothers returned to their work outside the home, and Gro was enrolled in child care. In the interview Gro's child care teacher describes the two mothers as the most perfect parents: 'There is never a shortage of diapers or clean clothes for changing, they are never rushing during drop-off and at pick-up-time, always paying attention to what is going on at the child care centre.' It strengthens the impression that they were both accountable for Gro's well-being on a continuous basis, by knowing the details and keeping an overview of Gro's everyday life, including her activities outside the home.

When the two mothers speak about the life they have set up for themselves and Gro, they underline the importance of conducting a predictable everyday life with routines that bring about a sense of security for their child. When they evaluate their way of sharing, they look first and foremost at their

¹ The children in this sample were born before same-gendered and opposite-gendered couples were equalised by Norwegian law (Ministry of Children and Equality, 2009).

child: they observe that she is doing fine. Both mothers are confident with all of the different tasks related to Gro, and they especially point towards the emotional engagement, that is, the fact that the child is emotionally attached to both parents.

Even practical tasks in the home are shared, and the both have all the necessary skills to run a household. What is more, they talk about sharing with joy. When the biological mother is asked whether she feels that she has succeeded in anything, her answer is about sharing:

I think that me and my co-mother, we make it work, together. I am so happy that we – I experience that we both take part in this project, and that we do it together. I can see that Gro learns a lot from co-mother and experiences a lot with her, and she talks a lot about things they have done together. We have a good time when we tell each other about things Gro has said or done – when we share the experience.

According to their logic, the parental task does not ‘steal time’ from the romantic love between them. Caring for the child is highly valued, and they describe it as a way of expressing their love not only for the child, but also for each other as partners. They both have the total care arrangement, including each other, in their minds.

Discussion & conclusion

The presented analyses of caregivers who shared the care of a particular child have demonstrated how each one of them was able to develop mutual familiarity to the participants in the set of events that they participated in. Such events were repeated over and over again, and thereby constituted a set of routines within the framework of an everyday life. And everyday routines do more than to create stability and reciprocal expectations for what is about to happen, they even enable the caregiver to tend to and interpret the child’s state of mind.

Most of the caregivers carried a cultural awareness of what might be the contested issues in particular arrangements for shared care for the youngest children. They had however, moved the question from *whether* a particular arrangement for sharing was appropriate, to *how* they could adjust to the circumstances and create viable arrangements with the child’s wellbeing and development in mind. Our assumption proved to be correct: an analytical strategy based on sensitivity for contested cultural issues in the repeated analysis of actual events, as such events were represented in the minds of the caregivers, could direct us to the ways these caregivers personalise ‘their’ child. Each caregiver was

able to connect to the child in the here and now, and at the same time to build up and adjust their representation of him or her as a continuous being with a past and a future. We learned from the practitioners how they proceeded to accomplish this, and also how they assessed their own experiences.

In each family, at least one of the parents assumed an overarching responsibility for the organisation of care for their child, but in each case, they valued and assessed the engagement from the other parent who was involved on a regular basis. We conceptualised the ideation of sharing the care to appear in *chains of care*, with all the links carefully sequenced, and with parents having and taking overall responsibility for the entire chain. Conceptualising shared care as links in a chain will also point to the cyclical character of care work. When parents talked about the needs of their small children, such needs emerged and became evident in the specific sense as reoccurring in a cyclical pattern. Any caregiver needs a number of ways to get acquainted with the cyclical regulation of their child in order to interpret their expressions at any particular moment in time. That is why *creating and following routines of everyday life* is so important for caregivers in the family as well as for those at the child care centre. The caregivers got to know ‘their’ child, and in turn the child got to know his/her caregivers through the psychological qualities of these routines and the affects they evoked in each of them. The parents did not claim that exactly the same routines had to be followed, but rather they would make a request for certain routines that would be recognisable to the child, and thereby ensure that the child could be included as an active participant. And the little child was actually taken as a partner in bringing personal experiences from one setting to another, all according to the individual child’s capability and motivation.

The records from the caregivers were stacked with notions about how the child was doing, and about ‘growing older’. They targeted some events for interacting with ‘their’ child that could assure them that the child was doing all right, but also events that pointed to ongoing changes and possible sources of discomfort. Comparison of such targeted events across different caregivers of the same child demonstrated that the caregivers did not necessarily have exactly the same sensitivities or the same responsibilities. They did not necessarily treat the child in exactly the same way, but they coordinated their efforts in order to make the child feel safe in both settings. Therefore, the exchanges between child care providers and parents were not just a way to bring factual information about what had happened from one caregiver to another, but also a kind of chat that could ensure that both parties had an individualised person on their mind.

The interviews with parents and professionals as practitioners demonstrated to us how the interactional patterns that were firmly established between child and caregiver also allowed for the mutual awareness of changes and further joint elaboration. Simply because caregiver and child would know each other so well from sharing a set of routines, they might at any moment notice whatever small divergences and digressions from such routines. By doing so, the child's engagements in routines of everyday lives allow caregivers to adapt to them as well as directing and supporting them, enabling the caregivers to set up scaffolds in some correspondence with the personal and cultural meaning of 'growing older' (Aukrust, 1992; Andenæs, 2012).

All of the caregivers that we have presented here carried in their minds images of the total care arrangement that was designed for their particular child. They got to know each other in this particular capacity to relate to and take care of the child and also in learning to identify *the capacities of the other caregivers*. Thus, for each caregiver shared care is about being recognized and valued, not only by the child, but by the other caregivers as well.

It may be argued that the contested issues related to shared care are indications that the norms and standards for care in children's early years are increasing rather than being lowered and ignored, and that the scope of how to care has been widened. The norm that caring for the smallest one should preferably be organized as one-one-person care has been challenged. Setting up care arrangements with more than one continuously engaged participant is a process of adaptation, not a sudden abdication from parental responsibility. Further, the cases have demonstrated the ways in which the caregivers coordinate their efforts and distribute responsibilities among them. The child is neither constructed as a baton in a relay race, delivered from one caregiver to the next, nor as a task that is easily split into pieces, one for each caregiver. What the caregivers do, according to these empirical studies, is to establish a number of ways to keep the child's state of mind in their own mind. This again enables them to direct their awareness toward how their own involvement and that of others fits in contributing to the subjectification and development of this particular little person. Thus, taking practitioners' experiences seriously may bring norms for tender care to a wider set of people and social arenas and accordingly transform such norms into procedures for recognising viable practices.

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Children, families, and communities in Brazil:

A cultural-ecological approach to child-rearing values and practices

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Abstract In this chapter we argue that variations in parents' child-rearing values, beliefs, and practices cannot be understood by viewing cultures as simply fitting somewhere along an "independent vs. interdependent" or "individualistic vs. collectivist" continuum. Instead it makes more sense to consider cultures as differing along two orthogonal dimensions (autonomy–conformity and relatedness–separation). Cultural-ecological theory requires attending to the everyday activities and interactions in which people engage, and how those activities and interactions are influenced (a) by the cultural group in which people live, (b) by the historical time in which they are growing up, and (c) by individuals' own personal characteristics. We use this theory to make sense of families and children in different communities in Brazil. Specifically, we show that within-society cultural differences of region, education, and income in Brazil are clearly reflected in parents' child-rearing values and beliefs and how those values and beliefs have changed over historical time. Most important, however, and as the theory predicts, these variations in values and beliefs have a strong influence on the activities and interactions in which parents engage with their children.

In the early 1990s two papers were published in the United States bemoaning the fact that the large majority of published research was being conducted with middle-class participants from European American backgrounds (Graham, 1992; Hagen & Conley, 1994). Children of different racial/ethnic groups from within the United States were rarely the focus of attention. Children's development in the rest of the world was even less studied. Despite what might have been seen as a wake-up call for researchers, the situation is no different today. A recent study of one issue of a leading North American journal of developmental psychology revealed that 95% of the citations were to works published in North America or the United Kingdom (Tudge & Freitas, 2012a). Tomlinson and Swartz (2004) examined the content of 12 journals (most published in the United States) dealing with infancy and childhood over a 6-year period (1996–2001) and reported that 94% of the articles dealing with infancy had North American or European authors and, not surprisingly as a result, that only 5% of the

populations studied were from outside of North America, Europe, and Australasia. Arnett (2008) made precisely the same point after having studied the authors and participants included in six of the journals published by the American Psychological Association. This is the case despite the fact that 90% of the world's infants are born in what Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) has termed the “majority” world and the conditions of life in parts of the majority world are entirely unlike those of the predominantly white and well-educated world. It is thus not surprising that Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010) noted major findings in psychology are based on samples that are drawn almost exclusively from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies. It is even more troubling when one realizes that citations within psychology journals published in other parts of the world widely cite North American studies (Tudge & Freitas, 2012a) as though they are relevant to conditions in their own societies.

It is thus important that Handbooks such as this and that of Fler, Hedegaard, and Tudge (2009) focus their attention on children's development in different parts of the world. In this chapter our focus is on families in Brazil, and specifically the child-rearing values and practices of Brazilian parents and others who are responsible for raising children. Rebhun (2005) wrote: “Until the 1970s most historians of the family in Brazil...characterized the Brazilian family as universally patriarchal” (p. 333), associated with large extended families, and a view that women's roles were primarily in the house and raising children, while men provided for the family (and also had considerable freedom outside the home). As Rebhun discovered in her interviews with families in rural areas of the northeast, the patriarchal family was still widespread in the 1990s. As she recognized, however, Brazil is a huge country with enormous diversity. Its size (approximately 18.5 million square kilometers) is almost the same as that of the United States, and the two countries are similar, too, in the fact that the largest proportion of their inhabitants can trace their roots to Europe, but with significant numbers of people who are descended from slaves brought from Africa, along with more recent immigrants from other parts of South America and Asia (Freitas, Shelton, & Tudge, 2008; Piccinini, Alvarenga, & Marin, 2013; Seidl-de-Moura, Carvalho, & Vieira, in press).

In terms of the overall Human Development Index (HDI: a composite of longevity, education, and health) Brazil is currently ranked as 85th of a total of 187 countries, with an HDI of .73. However, once inequality-related HDI (IHDI) is taken into account, this drops to .53 (UNDP, 2013). Brazil's HDI has been rising, however, and inequality has been reduced during the 21st century, largely due to the improved economic situation as well as the far greater attention paid to social programs for the poor, of which the “bolsa família” (which provides additional income to poor families while they

continue to keep their children in school) is the best known example (Soares, 2012). According to World Bank data, Brazil's GINI index (which ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 representing perfect equality and 100 perfect inequality of incomes) dropped from 60.1 in 2001 to 54.7 in 2009 (World Bank, 2012). Although there was an overall drop in the GINI index in Latin America during the same period (from 53 to 50, according to The Economist, 2012), the change was greater than average in Brazil.

Overall HDI or GINI data for Brazil fail to take into account of the great variability across the country as a whole. For example, Piccinini and his colleagues (2013) cite data showing that individual cities across the country have HDI scores ranging from .47 to .92 (the equivalent of the difference between Tanzania and Norway). Brazil has five distinct regions, each with its own ecological characteristics, different patterns of immigration, degrees of wealth and inequality, and even accents (Piccinini et al., 2013; Rebhun, 2005; Seidl-de-Moura et al., in press). Within each region there are urban and rural differences and social class variations (wide differences of family wealth, land, power, education, and type of occupation). Despite the fact that all families in Brazil share a language and have experienced the same history (although often from different points of view) parents' values and beliefs about how best to raise their children vary by these ecological and sociocultural factors.

A useful theoretical framework within which to examine Brazilian families, parents' values and beliefs, and the ways in which parent-child interactions take place, is cultural-ecological theory (Tudge, 2008; Tudge & Freitas, 2012b). Drawing on other systemic, ecological, and sociocultural theories, Tudge argued that there are four interrelated aspects that need to be considered in order to understand human development: (a) cultural context; (b) changes in that cultural context over time; (c) individual variability among the interacting partners; and (d) the types of everyday activities and interactions in which people typically engage. The latter are central to understanding development, and of course vary along with changes in the other three. Although each of these factors is synergistically linked with each other, for ease of presentation we will discuss each of them separately in terms of their relations with child-rearing values and/or practices.

Cultural context and child-rearing values

Before examining possible cultural variability within Brazil it would be helpful to consider more broadly some of the possible links between culture and the ways in which parents try to raise their

children. The term “culture” has been defined in many different ways. Here we will treat a cultural group as:

A group of people who share a set of values, beliefs, and practices; who have access to the same institutions, resources, and technologies; who have a sense of identity of themselves as constituting a group; and who attempt to communicate those values, beliefs, and practices to the following generation. (Tudge, 2008, pp. 3-4)

This definition does not specify the nature of the group; it can refer to an entire society or to groups within any given society, regardless of whether the groups are constituted regionally, ethnically, or in terms of their social class membership.

Currently there are two main ways in which the relation between culture and child-rearing values, beliefs, and practices has been conceptualized. The first, more traditional, approach is to treat cultures as varying along a single dimension or continuum; the second, more recent, approach is to place cultural groups within and across societies in one of four quadrants delineated by two orthogonal (independent) dimensions. In addition to these two main approaches there is a third, less commonly cited, approach, in which child-rearing values are linked to parents’ social class (specifically their past educational and current occupational experiences), treating social class as a cultural category. We will consider each of these in turn.

The first conceptualization refers to the two ends of the continuum either as individualism and collectivism (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995) or as independence and interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Scholars using this unidimensional framework describe two basic cultural models relevant to the ways in which parents think about raising their children. One of these models (individualism or independence) is usually described as encapsulating the United States and, by implication, other majority-white and industrialized societies. The other model (collectivism or interdependence) is said to capture better Asian societies and non-industrialized traditional societies.

These two models may themselves differ along two or more dimensions (Triandis, 2001) or consist of sub-models (Schwartz, 2012), and all of these scholars would agree that no society is made up entirely of individuals who are either individualistic or collectivistic. Nonetheless, distinguishing societies according to their placement on a single dimension has proved a popular approach (see, for example, Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). As the names suggest, parents living in societies that foster independence or individualism raise their children to become relatively autonomous, self-directing, and not well connected to groups outside the immediate family. By contrast, parents living in societies that encourage collectivism or interdependence encourage relations

between their children and others in the wider society and are less interested in having their children be self-directing. In the often-quoted saying attributed to the Japanese, the nail that sticks up above the rest will be hammered down.

The more recent position is that taken by Kağıtçıbaşı (2007, 2012) and Keller and her colleagues (e.g., Keller, 2012; Keller & Kärtner, 2013). Kağıtçıbaşı proposed that there are two orthogonal dimensions, one having to do with agency and the other with interpersonal distance. Along the vertical axis it is possible to think of parents encouraging their children to be relatively autonomous or relatively heteronomous (or obedient to their parents and others). Along the horizontal axis parents can encourage their children to be separate from others or more related to others. “Autonomy and relatedness are not end points of a continuum, as is often assumed. Such an assumption reflects an individualistic bias that claims that connectedness with others threatens autonomy or that related individuals lack autonomy” (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2012, p. 6).

In this conceptualization four types of families can be identified, fitting within the four quadrants created by the two orthogonal dimensions. One type consists of families that encourage a close connection with the group and require the young to obey their elders and follow the traditions of the group (heteronomous-related). A second type consists of families that are very interested in fostering close connections between children and the broader community and its traditions, but who also want their children to exercise some degree of autonomy, especially in the areas of education and occupation (autonomous-related). A third type consists of families that encourage their children to be both autonomous and not closely related to the wider community or to its traditions (autonomous-separate). The fourth type, which Kağıtçıbaşı considered to be relatively uncommon, consists of families that raise their children to follow the rules that others (particularly parents) lay down but not to be closely connected to the wider community (heteronomous-separate).

According to Kağıtçıbaşı, families with little or no education living in rural parts of what Kağıtçıbaşı has termed the “majority world” raise their children to be both connected with the group and to fit in which what parents, the elders of the group, and tradition requires (heteronomous-related). However, noting the move over time into cities in many parts of the majority world, and far greater educational possibilities, Kağıtçıbaşı (2007; Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005) argued that educated and urban parents in the majority world are likely to still want to raise their children to feel connected to the group but also make their own decisions about their future, particularly with reference to their education and occupation (autonomous-related). By contrast, middle-class parents in societies in the industrialized world (the United States often used as the clearest example) encourage their children to be both autonomous and separate.

Keller (2012; Keller & Kärtner, 2013) expanded on Kağıtçıbaşı's ideas, introducing the idea of different types of autonomy. Keller thus notes that whereas middle-class families in countries like the United States encourage "psychological autonomy" in their children, traditional and rural families in the majority world encourage "action autonomy" in theirs. In other words, whereas North American and European families encourage their children to think and plan for themselves, wherever possible, rural parents with little or no education provide their children with plenty of opportunities to walk early, engage in simple tasks (running errands, etc.), to care for younger siblings or look after the cattle (for examples from rural Kenya, see Tudge, 2008; Wenger, 1989; Whiting & Edwards, 1988). Very much like Kağıtçıbaşı, however, Keller sees there being two "prototypical" socialization strategies (one for autonomy and one for relatedness) and one "hybrid" strategy (corresponding to the autonomous-related type).

The third position that we can delineate is that of Kohn (e.g., 1977, 1979, 1995). Although Kohn's focus is on the links between social class and parental child-rearing values, social class clearly fits as a category of culture, given the definition with which we are working. Kohn's position also fits well within the overall cultural-ecological theory laid out earlier in this chapter, in that it assumes that the everyday activities in which people typically engage, alone or with others (cultural practices, in other words), are central to the ways in which culture both influences individuals' development and is influenced by it. Specifically, Kohn argues that parents' child-rearing values, particularly about autonomy or self-direction and conformity or obedience, are related to their own past educational and current workplace experiences. His starting position is that parents all want success, in some form or other, for their children; they differ, however, in what they think will lead to success.

Some parents' formal education ended while they were still relatively young. In this case, their educational experiences were such that their models for success consisted of classmates who did what their teachers wanted and responded to questions with the same information that the teachers or the texts had provided. Limited education typically leads to jobs in which workers are rarely required, or rewarded, for thinking for themselves but instead need to follow rules that others have established and diligently perform what has been required. The work itself may well be difficult (particularly physically difficult) but often is repetitious, involving little complexity. Assuming that parents want their children to be successful, parents with this type of educational background and current workplace experiences are likely, Kohn argued, to see their children's eventual success in terms of learning to follow rules and doing well and carefully what they have been asked to do.

By contrast, other parents' educational experiences were perhaps similar during their adolescent years but, because they went on to higher education, a part of those experiences involved seeing success not simply in terms of following the rules, but thinking for oneself and providing a reasoned

argument for one's opinions. People with a college degree (or more) have the potential for taking jobs that require more than simply following someone else's rules. Such jobs often are more complex, and involve thinking for oneself and making collaborative decisions with others. Not surprisingly, Kohn argued, parents with these types of educational backgrounds and occupational experiences view eventual success for their own children as requiring more in terms of autonomy and self-direction, and less in terms of conformity to the demands of others.

Kohn's argument is not that working-class parents only want their children to conform, or that middle-class parents are only interested in fostering autonomy in their children. All children need to learn when to conform to what parents and teachers want, and all children must develop some autonomy if they are not to be dependent on others for their entire lives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Kohn's point is simply that middle-class parents are more likely to see the value of encouraging self-direction in their children to help them become successful in later life whereas working-class parents are more likely to see the value of conformity.

Kohn and his colleagues have provided clear support for his ideas with research conducted in the United States, Italy, Japan, Poland, and Ukraine (Kohn, Slomczynski, & Schoenbach, 1986; Kohn et al., 2001). Data from other researchers, in both the United States and Russia, have also supported Kohn's arguments (Alwin, 1989, 1995; Curtner-Smith et al., 1995; Luster et al., 1989; Spade, 1991; Tudge, Hogan, Snezhkova, Kulakova, & Etz, 2000). Until recently, however, no research that we know of conducted in Brazil has used Kohn's approach.

There are some obvious similarities between the perspectives of Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller on the one hand and Kohn on the other, in that both are interested in parents' encouragement for autonomy and/or conformity. Although Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller make the clearer claim for autonomy-relatedness, Kohn also points out that parents do not encourage only autonomy or only conformity as they interact with their children, but act in part depending on the nature of the situation. The major differences are that Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller, from a cross-cultural perspective, are concerned with what happens, over time, when people who have lived in traditional and rural cultural groups move to cities and have greater access to education. Kohn, by contrast, deals with parents in the industrialized world, and focuses not in the changes in living experiences coming from a move to city life but in the nature of individuals' past educational experiences and their current workplace experiences. Another major difference is that Kohn does not assume that parents in industrialized societies typically value autonomy and raise their children accordingly; his position is equally relevant for any society in which there is variation both of educational and occupational possibilities.

A final important difference is the type of samples these scholars have used in their studies. Keller's research has primarily been conducted in cultural groups that are "maximally dissimilar" (Hallpike,

2004), comparing, for example, the Nso people from rural Cameroon and middle-class Germans; Kağıtçıbaşı has focused most of her attention on changes over time in a majority-world society (Turkey), showing how moving to a city and gaining education changes parents' child-rearing values; Kohn's work has been done in different parts of the industrialized world (e.g., United States, Italy, Japan), showing the more subtle differences in parents' values stemming from variations in their educational and occupational experiences. From our point of view, Kohn's work might be most helpful when trying to understand the heterogeneity of values, beliefs, and practices within and between societies.

Having laid out the three conceptualizations regarding links between culture and values (the unidimensional notion of individualism vs. collectivism, the view of orthogonal dimensions of agency and connectedness, derived from Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller, and Kohn's position related to social class), we will turn to the four primary aspects of Tudge's (2008) cultural-ecological theory to discuss child-rearing values and practices in Brazil. First we will discuss Brazilian cultural contexts and their influence first on child-rearing values and beliefs and then on child-rearing practices, next the ways in which cultural values change over time, then the influence of individual characteristics (those of both parents and children), and finally the crucial role of everyday child-rearing activities and interactions.

Cultural context and child-rearing values, beliefs, and practices in Brazil Child-rearing values and beliefs.

To what extent is there support for either the position of Kağıtçıbaşı and Keller (they are so similar that they can be treated as one) or that of Kohn with regard to child-rearing values and beliefs in Brazil? Neither Kağıtçıbaşı nor Keller collected data in Brazil, but it is reasonable to assume that Brazil and Turkey (the society in which Kağıtçıbaşı conducted her research) are similar in terms of the development of autonomous-related socialization patterns. Both are considered part of the "majority world," both have developed economically and now have large majorities of their populations living in urban areas (Brazil 85%; Turkey 72%) (World Bank, 2013) and have similar proportions of their 25- to 64-year-old population with higher education (Brazil 11%; Turkey 15%) (OECD, 2013). It will thus be useful to examine the extent to which Brazilian families living in cities in which there are more educational opportunities try to raise their children to be autonomous-related whereas parents in rural areas or smaller towns try to raise their children to be heteronomous-related.

One group of Brazilian scholars that has conducted a good deal of research in this area is that of Seidl-de-Moura and her colleagues, and some of their findings seem supportive of Kağıtçıbaşı's po-

sition. For example, Seidl-de-Moura, Lordelo, et al. (2008) reported (based on data gathered from Brazilian state capital cities) that mothers had child-rearing goals related to the development of both autonomy and of relatedness, although the measures used to assess these concepts were derived from Harwood (1992) rather than from Kağıtçıbaşı. Three main patterns of results were found, which seems to provide evidence for regional differences in the respective values for autonomy and relatedness. Mothers from capital cities in the north, northeast, and west, valued their children developing autonomy and relatedness equally. Mothers from capital cities in the south favoured the development of relatedness to autonomy, and mothers from Rio de Janeiro (in the southeast) favoured the development of autonomy to relatedness. In all cases, however, the mothers clearly valued both autonomy and relatedness. Seidl-de-Moura and her colleagues reported, however, that mothers from larger cities and with more education were more likely to have goals favouring autonomy; those from smaller cities and with less education were more likely to favour relatedness.

Similar findings were reported by Vieira, Seidl-de-Moura, Lordelo et al. (2010) regarding mothers' beliefs about child-rearing practices. There were some regional differences, with mothers in the north responding that they were more interested in their children's "proper presentation" (such as learning to say "hello" and "thank you" and not putting dirty things in their mouth) and those in the south being less interested in this type of presentation, and more interested in "stimulating" their children by talking or reading with them. Mothers with greater education were more likely to report stimulating their children, whereas those with less education were more likely to report encouraging proper presentation.

Data gathered by Vieira, Seidl-de-Moura, Macarini et al. (2010) allow a somewhat better test of the Kağıtçıbaşı/Keller position as they included mothers from much smaller towns (with less than 24,000 inhabitants) as well as capital cities from six states. As Seidl-de-Moura, Lordelo et al. (2008) had reported, mothers in the smaller towns were more likely to favour the socialization of relatedness than they valued autonomy. Contrary to their hypotheses, however, and despite the fact that mothers in the capital cities had significantly more education than did those in the small towns, education level was not related to variations in the extent to which the mothers valued autonomy in their young. Another study by members of this group (Seidl-de-Moura, Mendes, et al., 2013), using mothers who had the full range of educational background (illiterate to completed college and above) from Rio de Janeiro (with 6 million inhabitants) and a small city (170,000 inhabitants) in the southern state of Santa Catarina, found no significant differences by city size or by the educational background of the parents. Mothers in both cities reported valuing both autonomy and relatedness.

In sum, despite the great regional diversity that exists in Brazil, Seidl-de-Moura and her colleagues provide no compelling evidence for regional differences in terms of mothers' socialization beliefs and practices, at least in terms of their encouragement of autonomy and relatedness in their children. Differences at the regional level appear to be fairly small variations in the relative weight given to autonomy and relatedness (Seidl-de-Moura, Lordelo et al., 2008). Regional differences, it would seem, are less relevant than is the size of the city: mothers from small towns from different regions of Brazil were more likely to value relatedness and engage in relatedness-relevant practices than those relevant to autonomy, but mothers from capital cities equally favoured autonomy and relatedness (Vieira, Seidl-de-Moura, Macarini et al., 2010). Even more interestingly, despite the mothers from capital cities having significantly more years of education than their counterparts from the small towns, educational level was not associated with greater likelihood of encouraging autonomy. In other words, this set of findings appears to provide some support for Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007, 2012) position—mothers from Brazilian cities show clear evidence of the autonomy-related pattern of socialization. However, the fact that education was not more clearly linked to variations in the degree to which autonomy was encouraged runs counter to Kağıtçıbaşı's ideas.

Is there more support for Kohn's position? That is harder to evaluate, as very little research has been conducted that aimed at providing an empirical test of his ideas. However, Tudge and his colleagues (2013) collected data from 23 parents from two groups that were clearly distinguished in terms of both their education and occupation, with the 13 middle-class parents having at least some college and (if they worked outside the home) a professional occupation and the 10 working-class parents having no college and (if they worked outside the home) a non-professional job. The children were three months old when data collection began, and continued when the children were 36 and 72 months. At each age middle-class parents were significantly more likely to value autonomy and self-direction for their children than were working-class parents. The latter, by contrast, were significantly more likely to value conformity for their children.

In a related study, based on 68 parents (49 working class, 19 middle class) of 3-year-olds in Porto Alegre, middle-class parents who worked outside the home were significantly more likely than their working-class counterparts to describe their occupation as featuring complexity and allowing them to exercise autonomy in the workplace (Martins, Gonçalves, Marin, Piccinini, Sperb, & Tudge, under review). As in the Tudge et al. (2013) study, the middle-class parents were significantly more likely than were those from the working class to value autonomy and self-direction in their children, and significantly less likely to value conformity.

One can argue, therefore, that both positions have support in Brazil, at least for the view that to the extent to which education is linked to parents' class position, those with higher education are likely

to value autonomy somewhat more than conformity or relatedness for their children whereas those who have not spent any time in post-secondary (i.e., above 18) education are likely to value conformity in their children somewhat more than autonomy. The evidence is clear, however, that both conformity/relatedness and autonomy are valued. From Kohn's perspective, however, the same is true in even the most industrialized of societies. Valuing relatedness and autonomy is something that will be found in any and all groups, although a person's current and past experiences are likely to value the relative weight given to them.

Cultural context and child-rearing practices.

There are, of course, other ways in which to think about within-society cultural context that are not related to past educational or current occupational experiences, and that relate to other aspects of prevailing ecological conditions. Brazilian research in this area has focused on child-rearing practices, however, rather than on values and beliefs. In the south of Brazil it is possible to find small cities that were settled almost exclusively by immigrants from one or other European country and to this day consider their cultural roots to be important. Piccinini et al. (2013) cite an unpublished study by Piccinini, Maggi, and Caro (1993) in which data were gathered from mothers of Italian descent from one city and those of German descent from another. The mothers were presented with hypothetical situations in which a child behaved badly and the mothers were asked how they would react if their child behaved in that way. The mothers of Italian descent were significantly more likely than those of German descent to mention permissive strategies for dealing with everyday situations (the child refusing to eat, go to school, or go to bed). No differences, however, were found for the mothers' responses to moral situations (hitting, stealing, or damaging something at home).

Another important aspect of the prevailing ecology is the type of economic conditions in which a family lives. Unfortunately, none of the researchers who use either Kağıtçıbaşı's ideas or those of Kohn examine families living in poverty. Is there evidence that Brazilian poor families raise their children in different ways to those who are relatively better off? Direct comparisons are not usually possible, because Brazilian scholars studying the lives of poor families do not provide any comparative data. However, a number of scholars have reported a clear division of labour in such families, with mothers being almost exclusively involved in domestic tasks and raising the children whereas the fathers' responsibility (not always taken) is to provide monetarily for the family.

It is interesting to contrast the prevailing patterns among low-income families with those found in families whose circumstances are far better. Wagner et al. (2005) studied 100 families in Porto Alegre, in which over half of both the mothers and the fathers had a complete college education or more,

and found that most child-rearing tasks were shared, although the mothers did the bulk of the work with regard to cooking and school-related tasks. Cluster analysis with this sample revealed two clear groups of parents: one group of parents shared responsibility for school-related tasks whereas another group said that this was the mother's responsibility. Unfortunately, Wagner and her colleagues did not specify whether the two groups varied in terms of their educational background, but it is possible that those with higher education were more likely to share responsibility than were those with less education, given the studies with low-income families described above.

Changes over Time

These studies provide good evidence that within Brazil there are indeed cultural differences, whether related to region, degree of urbanicity, social class, or poverty in parents' child-rearing values and practices. It would be a mistake, however, to reify culture, assuming that cultural groups are themselves not developing over time, just as the people within them are developing. Kağıtçıbaşı (2007) pays particular attention to the movement, over historical time, from rural to urban living. Even without such movement, however, one generation does not simply pass on to the next generation its values, beliefs, and practices (despite the fact that it often attempts to do that and to some extent succeeds, providing continuity to the culture). Moreover, the next generation never simply copies, but appropriates, what has been done or valued before. The process is one of "interpretive reproduction" (Corsaro, 1992). Cultural-ecological theory, therefore, requires that one attends to the impact of historical time on changes in values, beliefs, and practices.

In the case of Brazil it is quite clear that parents' values, beliefs, and practices have changed over the past three generations. The research conducted by Biasoli-Alves and her colleagues and students, summarized in Biasoli-Alves (1995), provides clear evidence of changes both in child-rearing values and beliefs as well as in the day-to-day activities and interactions of mothers and their children. She pointed out that parenting in the 1930s and 1940s was primarily focused on raising moral and polite children, with most attention paid to good behavior. In the 1950s and 1960s there was much more evidence of raising children with tenderness and stimulation in order to help children's overall development, and mothers talked about the importance of play and other leisure activities. In the 1970s and 1980s, mothers stressed the need for dialog with their children, mutual understanding, and the child's subjective well-being.

Biasoli-Alves (1995) noted that women who had been mothers of young children in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s talked as though their children were "blank slates" and believed that appropriate parental socialization was all that was needed in order to raise the types of children that were desired.

Subsequently mothers were increasingly likely to talk in terms of the relationship between mother and child, with the mother taking account of her child's subjective experiences. It is not surprising, therefore, that mothers were more likely to talk about allowing their children freedoms, whereas older mothers were more likely to talk in terms of the restrictions it was necessary to provide.

Two of the studies that Biasoli-Alves (1995) summarized drew on data collected in the state of São Paulo, and so any differences in the mothers' comments cannot be attributed to regional differences.

On the other hand, those mothers who had young children in the 1930s and 1940s were obviously more reliant on their memories than was the case for the women who had children more recently. It is also worth pointing out that the majority of the mothers who were interviewed about their child-rearing values and practices in the 1970s and 1980s were well educated (with at least some college), and so some of the differences attributed to changes over time may be in part due to differences in the mothers' educational experiences. Other experiences changed as well, with Brazilian mothers from the 1960s onwards being more likely to work outside the home (Benicá & Gomes, 1998).

Their children's experiences, too, differed quite dramatically, with more young children spending time in a preschool environment from the 1960s onwards (see, for example, Freitas et al., 2008; Freitas, Shelton, & Sperb, 2009). Socialization forces become increasingly wider, the more time young children spend in preschool, and the family's role may well lessen as a result.

More recent data, collected as part of the Porto Alegre Longitudinal Study (PALS: Piccinini, Tudge, Lopes, & Sperb, 1998), revealed greater cross-generation consistency of parenting practices when the parents in this study were asked how they were raising their 3-year-old children and how they themselves had been raised (Marin et al., 2013). However, the similarities in practices were only found when comparing, quantitatively, the types of practices (inductive, coercive, or non-interference) parents mentioned. Qualitative analyses revealed that although some parents were happy to continue the types of child-rearing methods their parents had used with them, others were quite clear about having consciously chosen different methods for their own children. These intergenerational changes, however, appear to be more the result of individual variation rather than changes over time in a cultural group's values.

Individual Factors

It seems clear, so far, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to describe "the Brazilian family" without attending both to the within-society cultural context (region, urbanicity, social class, and poverty) and to changes over historical time. However, one cannot discount the impact of individual characteristics on child-rearing values and practices, and this is the third important component of cultural-

ecological theory. No cultural group is homogeneous, and individuals differ in the extent to which they want their children to be autonomous, obedient, related to others, and so on. Similarly, children themselves differ. One parent may think that raising a child to be autonomous is very important, but has a child who is hyperactive or oblivious to danger. In this case the parent is likely to want to control her child far more than she would prefer.

A series of papers published by Piccinini and his colleagues (Alvarenga, Piccinini, Frizzo, Lopes, & Tudge, 2009; Marin, Piccinini, & Tudge, 2011a, 2011b; Piccinini, Frizzo, Alvarenga, Lopes, & Tudge, 2007) as part of the PALS (Piccinini et al., 1998) revealed the ways in which parents from Porto Alegre modified the ways in which they dealt with their children during the children's first six years of life. Not surprisingly, as children started to use language more their mothers used more explanations with them. However, as the children by 24 months became more active and were better able to express their own feelings and wishes their mothers also said that they had to use more coercive practices (Piccinini et al., 2007). By the time the children were aged 36 months their mothers reported that they used significantly more inductive practices than they had reported at 24 months, and significantly more such practices than the fathers had reported; fathers too, however, reported using inductive practices more at 36 months than they had at 24 months (Marin et al., 2011a, 2011b). A second, related, study shows clearly the way in which children themselves influence their parents' child-rearing values and not just their practices. Tudge, Lopes, and colleagues (2013) collected longitudinal data on parents' child-rearing values as part of the PALS (1998) referred to above. As mentioned earlier, middle-class parents were more likely to value autonomy and self-direction for their children than were working-class parents, who valued conformity more. Given previous research on social class, this result was not surprising. What was surprising was the fact that the parents' values changed over time, with both groups, on average, being more likely to say that they valued autonomy and self-direction when their children were aged 3 and 72 months and less likely to do so when their children were aged 36 months. As was clear from interviews, many (but not all) of the parents commented on the fact that at 36 months their children were more demanding and parents needed to be controlling of them. Other parents, however, did not change their values, in part because they felt no need for it, commenting on the fact that their children had not become more difficult as they aged.

Likewise, Martins' (2014) study indicated that middle-class and upper-middle class mothers' socialization goals varied depending on the baby's sex. When the baby was about six months of age, mothers of girls mentioned more frequently self-enhancement goals, which emphasize the importance of autonomy. In contrast, mothers of boys more frequently mentioned social expectation goals, which emphasize the importance of adjusting to the prevailing social rules. When these children were

about 18 months old these differences were no longer found. According to Martins, it is possible that, when babies were younger, their mothers had more idealized beliefs, which were more reflective of prevailing cultural views about gender. However, with their children's development and growth, their beliefs may have been more consistent with their perceptions of their children's individual characteristics.

Typically Occurring Child-rearing Activities and Interactions

Families' culture-related values and beliefs, changing over generations as they do, and parents' and children's individual differences of personality and temperament influence children's development in the course of the typical types of activities and interactions in which parents and children are engaged (Tudge, 2008). It is particularly in the course of their interactions that parents' child-rearing values and beliefs are likely to influence their children's development, although they also influence via the settings into which their children are placed, the objects that are provided, and the experiences that their children have. It is thus unfortunate that there is extremely little research devoted to examining the typically occurring everyday activities and interactions in which children engage with their parents, siblings, and teachers and friends in child-care centers.

Using PALS (Piccinini et al., 1998) data, Piccinini, Tudge, Marin, Frizzo, and Lopes (2010) found that middle-class mothers were significantly more likely than their working-class counterparts to engage with their 3-month-old children in ways that were likely to draw their babies into interaction (interpreting/talking for and accommodating to the baby), but were no more likely to talk to, look or smile at, bounce, or caress/kiss the child. This was the case despite the fact that babies of middle-class parents were no more likely than those from working-class families to look at, smile, cry, or vocalize to their mother. In other words, the children in the middle-class families did not seem to be eliciting different types of interacting behavior; the mothers, valuing their babies' autonomy, are interacting in them in ways to encourage that autonomy.

In related research, a study of 20 children from PALS when they were aged 36 months featuring 20 hours of observation over the equivalent of an entire waking day, Tudge (2008) found that the children of middle-class families spent a greater proportion of their time than did working-class children in activities involving verbal interaction with adults ("lessons" about numbers, words, nature, how to do things, etc. and "distancing" conversations about things that were not part of the on-going activity), and also spent more of their time playing with school-related objects. By contrast, children from working-class families spent a greater proportion of their time playing with toys and watching TV than did their middle-class counterparts.

Other data from the same PALS longitudinal study did not feature observations of parents' child-rearing practices, but interviews with the parents about the practices they said that they typically employed. When the children were aged six, middle-class mothers reported that they used significantly more inductive practices and fewer coercive practices with their children than did working-class mothers (no differences were found for fathers) (Marin, Piccinini, Gonçalves & Tudge, 2012). Moreover, mothers who reported more coercive practices also were significantly more likely to report that their children had behavior problems, in particular externalizing problems. Fathers who reported using more inductive practices said that their children were more likely to be cooperative, whereas those who used more coercive practices noted that their children were significantly more likely to show internalizing problems.

Although Marin et al.'s (2012) study was purely correlational and could therefore make no claims about the direction of effects, it is worth noting that these were the same mothers who provided data about their child-rearing values when their children were aged 3, 36, and 72 months (Tudge, Lopes, et al., 2013). As pointed out earlier in the chapter, these mothers' values changed as their children developed. However, despite those age-related changes it was also the case that, on average, middle-class mothers were consistently more likely than their working-class counterparts to value their children's autonomy and self direction and less likely to value conformity and obedience. In other words, although there were changes in the strength with which individual parents valued autonomy or obedience there was also consistency of values in the two social class groups. Given that inductive practices fit well with the goal of encouraging children's autonomy, whereas coercion might be more likely in cases in which obedience is required, the longitudinal data suggest that there may be some support for a predictive connection between inductive practices and social cooperation and coercive practices and behavior problems.

In other words, parents' values and beliefs have an influence on their children's development by means of the ways in which they interact with their children and via the everyday activities and interactions in which they encourage their children to participate. However, social class is clearly not a determinant of parents' values, beliefs, or practices although it seems to influence them; individual parents from the same class background are not homogeneous. When analyzing parents' responses to a set of scenarios such as those in which children did not want to go to bed, parents varied in the extent to which they said that they would use coercive or inductive techniques with their 18-month-old children (Piccinini, Frizzo et al., 2007). These variations were not linked to the parents' social class, however.

It is also important, when considering the child-rearing role played by family members in Brazil, to recognize that it may be neither the mother nor the father who has the primary responsibility for the

children. The Brazilian children who were observed in Tudge's (2008) study spent a large proportion of the time they were observed in child-care centers (about one-third of the observations). In some lower-income families a grandmother or aunt may take on the parental role and often, in poor communities, others within the immediate neighbourhood look out for all children (Heilborn, 1997). Sometimes it is older siblings who have the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings (Dellazzana, 2008; Dellazzana & Freitas, 2010; Dellazzana & Freitas, 2012; Ferreira, 1991; Ferreira & Mettel, 1999; Poletto, Wagner, & Koller, 2004). Dellazzana and Freitas (2010), for example, described the daily routine of 20 adolescents, 16 females, who had between two and eight siblings, in socially vulnerable situations in Porto Alegre. Two types of sibling caregiving were discovered: (a) formal, when the older sibling is totally responsible for her or his younger siblings; or (b) informal, when a parent (usually the mother) is responsible and the older sibling helps to provide care of younger siblings. This study also showed that adolescents of both sexes can be involved in sibling care activities, even though this task is primarily performed by females. Dellazzana and Freitas (2010) found that adolescent caregivers' school performance suffered and they had fewer opportunities to engage in leisure activities. Although Dellazzana and Freitas (2010) did not consider these adolescents' views on child rearing, the adolescents revealed that although they did not believe that physical punishment was the best approach to deal with a younger sibling doing something considered wrong, they also did not think that dialog with the younger offender would help the situation (Dellazzana, 2008).

Sibling care is not found among Brazilian middle-class or wealthy families. However, child-rearing responsibilities in these families with young children is often turned over, for at least part of the day, to the *babá* (nanny), who in some cases may be as old, or not much older, than the siblings who provide child care in some poor families. As Fanti and Ristum (2008) discovered, these are girls or young women with little education or prospects, who earn little income, and whose ideas about how to raise children may not always coincide with those of the parents. They often take an authoritarian and directive approach with the children, whether in the course of play or when the children are eating, and rarely take into account the children's wishes. Fanti and Ristum also pointed out that very few of the parents in their study provided the nanny with any information about how they were expected to interact with their children, perhaps because the parents were unaware that their interactional styles might be different.

Conclusions

Brazilian families, it is clear, do not fit a single pattern, when considering their child-rearing values and practices. In this chapter we have shown why it is helpful to use a theoretical framework that requires attention be paid to four interrelated aspects: the cultural context, in particular cultural values and practices; how those values and practices change over historical time; the influence of individual variability; and, most important, the typically occurring activities and interactions in which children engage with those who are trying to raise them. Parents' child-rearing values, and the ways in which they try to put them into practice with their children, vary across cultural groups within the society, regionally, and also depending on the access to resources. We have shown, at least for values of autonomy, self-direction, relatedness, and conformity to the rules that others have laid down, that Brazilian parents (mostly mothers have been studied) differ in the relative weights that they place on these values depending on whether they live in rural areas, small towns, or major cities. One could argue that these degrees of variation in autonomy and relatedness support Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) and Keller's (2012) view that Brazil is a "majority-world" society in which many people currently live in urban areas and have access to education, and therefore fit the "hybrid" autonomous-related pattern. However, without good data showing that rural families with limited education fit into the heteronomous-related pattern, the support is weak. It is weakened further by Kohn's (e.g., Kohn, 1995; Kohn et al., 2001) data showing that even in industrialized societies well-educated parents also value both autonomy and relatedness/conformity for their young as well as by Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeir's (2002) analysis of studies showing that in the United States parents are as likely to value collectivism as individualism. As Kohn would have predicted, Brazilian middle-class parents are likely to stress the value of autonomy, given that their current and past educational and occupational experiences reward them for expressing it. They therefore provide their children with opportunities to be autonomous. This does not mean, however, that they are uninterested in obedience and conformity, and, as Tudge et al. (2013) showed explicitly, valued autonomy relatively lower, and obedience relatively higher, when their children were of an age to try to impose their points of view. Brazilian working-class families, by contrast, are more likely to stress the importance of relatedness and conformity, given that fitting in with what others require is most commonly linked to their experiences of educational and job-related success.

When considering children's development, culture (whether considered at the societal level or when thinking about within-society cultural differences, such as region, ethnicity, or social class) is not a determining factor, influential although it is. Culture, as Biasoli-Alves (1997) or Beticá and Gomes (1998) showed clearly, changes with succeeding generations, as one generation does not simply ac-

cept or imitate the values or practices of the previous one. When reading research about child rearing, including in Brazilian families, in other words, it is as important to be aware of the time when the study was conducted (its temporal context) as where and with what group of families the work was done (its sociocultural context).

Individual parents, however, are not simple reflectors of either their cultural or temporal context. Parents, in any given cultural group and at any given historical period, reflect the culture's currently prevailing values, but they do not do so in any homogenous way. Their own personal characteristics, as well as those of the people they interact with, including their own children, influence which of those prevailing values they hold most dear and the extent to which they are valued. But for those values to be passed on to their children, parents (and others who are responsible for children's socialization) need to act and interact with those children in accord with those values, and provide opportunities for their children to also put those values into effect.

The longitudinal research published as part of the PALS (Piccinini et al., 1998) illustrates clearly the ways in which mothers who value their children's autonomy provide more opportunities for their children to act autonomously by engaging with them in more inductive ways. By contrast, parents who valued conformity and obedience behaved in more coercive ways as they tried to get their children to conform to the parents' wishes. It is in the course of typically occurring activities and interactions that values and beliefs come head to head with individual variabilities.

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Children's cultural learning in everyday family life exemplified at the dinner setting

Mariane Hedegaard

Abstract The aim in this chapter is to propose a way to conceptualise children's learning through their participation in activity settings in everyday practices at home. I argue that children learn practice traditions and values through the demands that children experience both indirectly through the setting and directly from parents and siblings. Children's also put demands on the setting and its participants and how these are met leads to children's development of new forms of social interaction, new motives orientation and competences. The argument builds on a research project following children through participant observations in their everyday activities in two families (Hedegaard & Fler 2013). The family members in the two families got an instant camera and were asked to take photos of what were important for them. In this chapter the focus is on how demands and motives influence both parents and children's at the dinner setting.

Inspired by research that has focused on children's everyday activities and learning in a broad frame of family settings (Barker & Wright, 1954; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Greishaber, 2004; Hedegaard & Fler, 2008, 2013; Højholt, 2012, Kousholt, 2011, Tudge, 2008) I will in this chapter argue that it is important to see learning not only as resulting in person's acquisition of new competences but also of values leading to new motive-orientations and new positions in concrete activity settings. This form of learning may be seen as *cultural learning*. Cultural learning in families takes place through parents and children negotiation of demands in concrete activity settings that may lead to new forms of social interaction between children and parents and to children's development of new motive orientation and competences. In this chapter I will analyze how children's cultural learning takes place in their family with focus on an activity setting that is seen in Scandinavian families as central - the dinner setting – and how not only the demands from specific family members but also from the child's position in other practices such as school may influence and create new motive orientations.

The aim in the following sections is to get deeper into an understanding of children's cultural learning with focus on motive-orientation, values and traditions. The analysis is divided into four sections. In the first section I will outline a theoretical approach to children's learning and development that

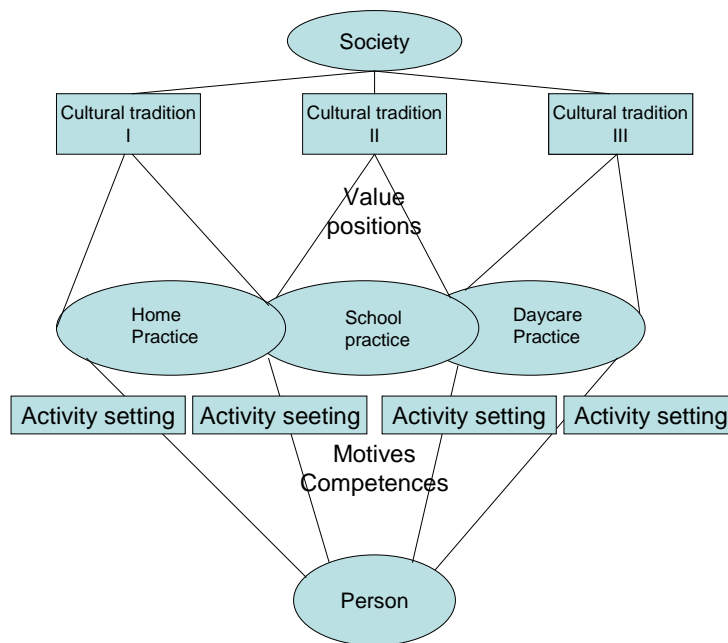
can be seen as a wholeness approach. Children are seen in this approach as engaged in activities in different activity settings across different institutional practices. In the following section a concrete project is presented analyzing what is important for children in Danish families illustrated with four children's photo-taking in two different families. The third section focuses on how societal demands influence the family practice and its concrete activity settings and through this creates children's social situations. Even though children participate in the same activities in a family setting their social situation may be quite different, because demands from other settings may place demands differently on the different participants and also that children in different age periods have different motive-orientations. This will be illustrated in the last section in an analysis of changes in a family's interactions in a dinner setting over time.

A wholeness approach

Barker and Wright (1957, 1971) were pioneering with their Midwestern study following children in their everyday life throughout the day. I have been inspired by their study but instead of doing a behavioral study to analyze children in their everyday life. I have chosen an activity theory approach, and thereby changed the focus of analysis from children's behavior in behavioral settings to their activities in activity settings, whereby children's motive orientation become central and changes in motive orientation can be followed.

Leontiev's theory of activity, with motive as a central concept (Leontiev, 1978), gives a tool for analyzing how the dynamic in a person's activities evolves through their development of motives. Studying children's in their everyday life the focus is on the child in his or her everyday activity settings in the different institutional practices that s/he participates in. The main practices for children in Scandinavian societies are home, school and afterschool care with the different activity settings during a child's week day: morning activities, the different subject classes in school, recess, afterschool care, snack time coming home, dinnertime, and bed time (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: A model illustrating the relations between society- practice and persons with cultural traditions and activity settings as mediating links



Leontiev's theory of children's development starts with the concept of primary needs, but when a child's need through his or her acts according to Leontiev become attached to an object, the object becomes the motive for the child's activity. The concept of object, however, is not to be associated with 'things' as such, as pointed out by Davydov, Zinchenko and Talyzina (1983). They write that an object should not be understood as a thing that exists in itself but as that toward which an act is directed; this can be a person's activities, ideas, but also things, that becomes the 'object' of a person's activity. I have argued (Hedegaard, 2012a) that Leontiev's theory of the dynamic of a person's activity has to be extended and located within the cultural practice of the dominating institutions in a child's life. Thereby it becomes possible to distinguish between institutionalized objectives as valued motives for institutional practice and persons' motives and intentions. To highlight the difference between institutionalized valued motives and a person's motives the terminology of motive orientation has been used (Hedegaard, 2012a). This catches the idea that a person's motives are always established as a relation between the person and what the person's activity is directed towards. Thereby it becomes possible to analyze the dynamic between the environment and the child as a relation between institutional demands and values and a person's motivated activities within his/her social situation.

In earlier writings I have advocated (Hedegaard, 2009, 2012b) for a wholeness approach taking into consideration the societal conditions, the institutional practices and its activity settings and the child's social situation and motive orientation (see Figure 1). In my theoretical conceptions (Hede-

gaard 2012b) of the relations between society and its institutions these are seen as mediated by cultural traditions for institutional practices. Culture thereby becomes located in the different activity settings that may be found in an institution. In the family this may be traditions for breakfast and leaving for school, for afternoon snack, for dinner and bedtime. When new institutions are introduced into a child's life (or a parent's life) it influences the whole family (e.g., a child enter school is reflected in changes in a child's positions at home). Becoming a school child means getting new responsibilities which enter influence home practice and the family's life as new demands and motive orientations. These new demands and motive-orientations change a child's relation to other family members and thereby his or her social situation in the different activity settings changes (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013).

What is important in children's everyday life: A family study

The analyses presented here are taken from a research project where the aim has been to follow children's different activities over an extended period in their everyday life in families and beyond, with special focus on the demands they meet and the motive orientation and competences they develop.² The examples in this article focus on four children from two different families; Martin and Emil who just started school (6 years old) and Anna and Lulu who are respectively the older sisters of Martin and Emil. The girls have been in school for two years when the project started. In this presentation I focus on the school starters to be able to show how their activities in the family changes, and to compare their initiated activities to their older siblings. The idea is to follow (interpret) how a child's position in a family changes by the child's acquisition of a new motive orientation that leads to new demands that are directed at the other family members.

Anna and Martin are from a Danish Middle class family living in a suburb to Copenhagen -the Vanløse family. Emil and Lulu are also from a Middle class family from a Copenhagen suburb-Fredriksberg; in this family there were two other children Kaisa (4 years) and Laura (10 years). Participant observation was conducted over a period of 10 month, with 30 visits to each family around 3 hours each time to study the activities at home between parents, children and siblings and also to follow the children entering into the different activities outside home, primarily, school and daycare, but also leisure time activities, such as gymnastics and music. At the start of the study all members in the family got an instant camera and were asked to take photos of what was important for them. The cameras were returned within the first month of the study. The researcher then made a photo-

² Part of this project is described in Hedegaard & Fleer, 2013.

book for each member and sat down with the whole family at a home visit and asked each member to explain why they took each of the pictures. The whole family was gathered in this event following each other's explanation. This took place in each family over two home visits, one for the parents and one for the children.

Four children's choice of what is important in their everyday life

One can get an impression of, what is central for many Danish children in early school age by focusing on the themes in Martin, Anna, Emil and Lulu's photos. The instruction for the families when getting the cameras was that they should take pictures of what was important for them.

The four children all documented persons and places in their life that were important. There are clear similarities among the children's choice of topic in their pictures, which I ascribe to their living in the same community of Copenhagen with shared traditions for children attending school, after school activities and leisure time activities, and visiting school friends after school hours.

Table 1: Content of the photos

Martin	Anna	Emil	Lulu
Photos taken at home			
Mother, father and Anna in the sofa	Mother, father and Martin in the sofa	2 photos of Mother	2 photos of Mother with children at dinner table doing homework
Family at dinner	Family at dinner	2 photos of Family at dinner table	family at the dinner table
Grandmother 1 in her kitchen	Grandmother I and grandfather on their sofa	Mother at home	Kaisa and Laura at dinner table eating snacks
	Grandmother II in a chair at home	Mother with Kaisa at her lab	Mother reading for the three siblings sitting in bed
		2 photos of father at home	Mother in coat ready for leaving
		2 photos of Grandmother at coffee table (1 includes Kaisa)	Aunt with Kaisa at her lab
	2 photos of Family and their dinner club	2 photos of breakfast table	Family at the breakfast table
	Anna playing a board game with Emil	Kaisa at the swing	Laura washing dishes

	Cathy dressed up	Lulu in her bedroom	Kaisa and friend blowing soap bubbles in the bathroom
	Cathy and Anna dressed up	Laura in the sofa	Lulu taking on boots
		Niece and Kaisa	Laura in bed Kaisa at the bedside
		Niece and Emil	
	Photo of map of Vanløse	Living room Upstairs	
	Photo of a family photos of all family members	Lulu and Laura at homework	
Aunt in the kitchen	Aunt at the dinner table	The young girls that babysit	
Aunt at coffee table		Emil and Kaisa's bedroom	
Teddy bears	Teddy bears	A small figure	Small figurines
Researchers		2 photos of researchers	
Photos from places outside home			
Karla in school		after school pedagogue 1	Best friend in her home
3 photos of school interior		after school pedagogue 2	Best friend looking at books in library
Photo of school building	All classmates arranged to be in a photo	Niece and Kaisa	Three school friends
3 photos of friends in school yard	2 photos of friends eating at church arrangement	Aunt and Lulu	Teacher and three school friends
4 photos of daycare interior	2 photos of friends doing creative work at after school care		Visiting friends and playing
3 photos of friends in daycare			Lunch in the after school care
2 photos of Karla at home	1 photo of family feeding ducks		School mates climbing in a net construction
1 photo from family excursion	2 photos from family excursion	Father at his boat	playing restaurant in after school care
Peers at gymnastic	2 photos of playing flute at music lesson		2 Photos of gymnastic activities

What we found was that all children took picture of all family members, and they all took the cameras to school and afterschool care and leisure activities to take pictures of friends and pedagogues. All four children really tried to get around photographing what was important for them, not only taking

pictures at home. All four children took photos of the family at the dinner table; the older children also took photos of the dinner table with grandparents and/or the families friends.

Starting school is an important event. This is very explicitly demonstrated in Martin's photos. In his photos he starts to take a photo of his best friend in school Karla. Then he takes a photo of the interior of his classroom, and one of the outside and one of the playground.

The primary differences between the two youngest children Martin and Emil and their older sisters were that for the younger children the pictures primarily focused on the persons without focusing on the activities, except for the dinner photos, where the older sisters focused on the persons in the activities at home and in school and after school care. This became even clearer when they explained why they took the photos, because the two youngest children only pointed out who were on the photo and could not say much more about each photo even when researcher or parents prompted them to explain what was going on in the picture.

The dominating theme in children's photos was dinner - perhaps because this activity is shared and well known as an activity where the whole family is together.

In the following section a microanalyses of the Vanløse family at the dinner table demonstrates how family dinner traditions and values become a cultural learned activity for children. Children's cultural learning at the dinner setting has to be seen in relation to the dinner setting as a societal tradition with values of what is right and wrong. In the next section I will outline how societal demands on family practice frames the traditions found in the different family settings.

Societal demands on family practice and how the demands influence children's social situation

Demands directed to both parents and children are connected with children entering new institutions. The parents have to care for the child in new ways when the child enters kindergarten and later school. These institutions indirectly structure a family's life together with institutions such as parents' workplaces, their church, health care institutions, etc.

Most nations have formulated some general laws for child care, so that in severe cases of abuse and neglect of children, they can be removed from their families. United Nations (1990) *Convention on the Right of the Child* contains a wide range of children's rights that are ratified by many countries (see also Archard, 2003 for a discussion of this document and children's rights in families and societies). In most homes though, there is not a focus on societal demands (i.e., on laws and regulations) for how families should care for children, except for bringing their children to school. Instead cultur-

al traditions dominate the activity settings, traditions that both reflect societal traditions and families' individual versions.

The family members meet the societal demands in the extended family in the community and in the media. Grieshaber (2004) describes this as 'regimes of truth', meaning how in the community and media people talk about raising children, and what mothers and fathers and children should accomplish. Each family develops more or less their own individual traditions of home practice described by Grieshaber (2004) as 'regimes of practice'.

The family practice is important for how children come to play, learn and develop. Different research projects show that Scandinavian parents value being together with their children and managed this through the mealtime and shared daily activities, such as doing house chores and bringing children to and from school (Aronsson 2006; Aronsson & Cekeite, 2011; Nairn, 2011). Parents take care to be with their children through the daily activities, they take time to sit down and eat together, talk with their children when they drive them or fetch them from school, and they draw the children into the daily chores at home.

This tradition was also found in the two Danish families presented above, where families were together for daily meals in the morning and in the evening, and children were drawn into the daily chores together with the parents.

Children's social situation

Adults' values influenced the shared activity settings but the single child's motive orientation and demands also influence the activities in the shared setting. Children are not just socialized to be part of the adult's practices, through their interacting with other persons they also contribute to create the different activity settings in a family. By focusing on the family it became clear that both children as well as the parents through their daily activities cooperate in creating the different settings in a family practice (Hedegaard & Fler, 2013). Viewed from family practices this means that the parents are the primary creators of the different settings in their family with traditions and values but children through their motive orientation create the actual activities in interaction with the parents. The children can be seen as cultural learners contributing to their own conditions for learning and the families' evolvement of traditions and values. It is striking though how much demands from other practices influenced and contributed to a family's way of interacting in the different activity setting of a family.

Bronfenbrenner (1970) has pointed to the importance of the involvement of parents, teachers and other adults that are central in the child's everyday life in his/her daily activities, as well as across institutional practices. In his book *Two worlds of childhood*, Bronfenbrenner discussed the importance of the emotional relation for a child in imitating activity, and especially the importance of the adults in taking an ethical responsibility for supporting children in their relation to community and society. Bronfenbrenner wrote that adult's involvement as models for children will lead children's growing involvement and responsibility on behalf of their own family, community and society as well as to individual autonomy (1970, pp. 165-166).

Each child in a family contributes to the creation of a family's activity settings through the activities they initiate. However, the different children in a family initiate or enter into the same activity setting differently, depending upon the child's social situation of development that characterizes their specific age period. Also they bring with them demands and motives from settings in other practices. Bozhovich (2009) points to how the affective relationship between children and the environment creates children's positions, but also how their positions influence the affective relationship with other persons and how the same events in a family can lead to different social situations for siblings in the same activity setting. A child's actual emotional expression in a social situation can be a clear indicator of his/her motive orientation to shared activities and how this orientation is realised in interaction with others.

Eating dinner together in Scandinavian families is an important event

Dinnertime in the evening is seen by many as a period in the day when family members can be together, and where the feeling of a shared family can be created (Aronsson, 2006; Aronson & Cekaite, 2011; Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011; 2000, Holm, 2001; Korvela, Ellegård, & Palojoiki, 2007; Demuth & Keller, 2011; Pontecorvo, Fausula, & Sterponi, 2001; Pontecorvo, Pirchio, & Steponi, 2000). In our research, we found that the families we studied followed the Scandinavian tradition of eating dinner together in the evening, even during midweek, without watching television or listening to the radio. We noted that these families took the "togetherness of family meal times" rather seriously.

In the research with the instant cameras both adult and children took photos of the dinner as a shared event. The Mother in the Vanløse family expresses this view - the importance of togetherness at the meal time - in her explanation of her photo of the family at the dinner table. Her first photos were of the family at the dinner table, one eating dinner and one after the dinner. Her comment was:

This photo is when we have finished the dinner. The others [the children and the husband] wondered why I would also take the picture *after* the dinner. But when we eat we talk so much, we sometimes stay an hour at the dinner table because we talk and talk about everything. So I think it is important; it is cozy when we eat, but also to stay afterwards.

This mother also took photos of eating together with grandparents and friends. And they have a community event - a church service for children each week. This was organized so that the member of the church community had dinner together afterwards. They call this church event “spaghetti church service”. Commenting on this photo she says:

This is from the “spaghetti church service” I have been thinking, that this is also a picture of being together in the family when being with other people. If it is in a church or a sports club it does not matter.

The father in this family also expressed the importance of having dinner together he says to his picture of the dinner:

I also think like Hanne [his wife] that to sit and eat and talk together is a very cozy thing. So many times during the day where we are only together very little or even each of us just makes our own things. In the morning we are very busy. This is the place where we all can be together, and where we may talk about what we have experienced during the day.

Martin continues: One can relax.

Father: Yes relax and sit on the lap if one is called Martin.

The cultural learning that takes place around the dinner table between parents and children is not only from parents to children but may be seen as bidirectional. This is both indirectly, as when adults make children eat their vegetables, the adults themselves have to eat their vegetables (Waksler, 1996), but also directly, as when children correct the adults or imitate them and thereby function as a mirror of the adults. The bi-directionality of cultural learning around the dinner table has also been put forward by Pontecorvo, Fausula, and Sterponi (2001). They use the concept of *apprenticeship* for both adults and children, writing that “Parents learn to be parents with their children and children learn to be sons or daughters of their specific parents” (Pontecorvo et al., p. 344).

The dinner setting can be seen as a moral arena (Aronsson & Forsberg, 2010; Aronsson & Gotzén, 2011) where parents negotiate with children about what to eat and how to interact. The dinner setting also gives opportunities for discussion and reflection in relation to what might be right or wrong in the events in which the different family members participated during a particular day.

In the following section children may be seen as having different social situations in the same dinner setting, and in different ways influenced by their attendance to other institutional practices.

A Family at the Dinner Table³

I will examine the settings for dinnertime in the Vanløse family over two separate observations. The first example is from the beginning of the visits to the family. The second example is from the last visit to the family eight months later. Following the two children over 30 visits I was able to follow the change in position that took place especially for Martin through establishing a position as a school boy at home. At the first dinner setting each of the siblings had a school friend visiting, who also stays for dinner, which is not an uncommon event in Denmark, when children have play mates coming home with them. At the last dinner setting there was no schoolmates visiting. What become obvious is that Martin's demands on the parents have changed from the first to the last dinner observation and conflictual and provoking activities have entered into the last dinner setting.

First Dinner Observation

There are two playmates visiting Karla, who is Martin's best friend and Cathy who is Anna's friend. They both stay for dinner. The two researchers have been in the Vanløse home together with the children since they arrived home from day care at 3:30 PM. The children have watched television and have had an afternoon snack. Later the researchers went with each child when they played in their respective bedrooms with their friends.

At the dinner table: Anna and Karla have set the table and all four children were asked to go to the bathroom and wash their hands. They are now sitting around the dinner table. The food

³ The analysis of the Vanløse family at the dinner table is an extended version of the analysis in Chapter 9 in Hedegaard & Fleer (2013), with a focus on the concept of cultural learning.

served is lamb steak, taziki salad, green salad, and bread. The family and their guests are expected to all sit down at the table and wait until the parents gives a sign to start eating the food.

The mother and father sit down at the table and the mother says “Please start.”

The father sends the bread around. When the mother passes the bread to Anna, a piece falls down.

The mother says, laughing, “See what happens now.”

Anna: “Ehh! Mooom, it was you.”

The meat is sent around. When Anna tries to take two pieces, her mother says “You can take only one.” Then Anna asks if she can take the large piece.

Her mother responds with “Do not take this big one,” but then she serves Anna the big piece.

Anna comments that her mother has given her the big piece that she was not allowed to take herself. All children put meat on their plates.

The father cuts Martin’s meat up and asks whether he wants to have the thin fatty edge cut off.

First, Martin said yes, and his father says “this is what you call the salt edge.”

Martin: “Then I like it – I would like to have it.” Martin likes to have salt; he heaps almost a full teaspoon onto his plate, and then dips his meat into it.

Karla says to Martin, “This is much more than we may take at home.”

The mother explains that one should not eat too much salt.

Martin: “But it’s healthy to have salt if you do not get too much of it, but unhealthy if you get too much.”

The family talks about how the butter knife has changed. It turns out that Karla has swapped her knife with the butter knife.

In her attempt to cut a piece of meat, Anna spills taziki down into her lap.

Her mother says with a grin, “OH! Anna what are you doing?”

Anna: “Well ...”

Mother: “It’s okay – we will do washing again another day.”

Martin comments on why Karla has the butter knife by saying. “We have killed the butter.”

Karla and Martin giggle together.

Mother: “Martin and Karla – have you finished kissing now?”

Grins from the two girls across the table.

Martin: “We are not! Mooom!”

Demands for Conduct at the Table

The parents are aware of the children’s problems with eating; perhaps because there are two observers present. The mother demands that Anna should not take too much meat onto her plate, thereby setting a norm for the rest of the family to balance what they put on their plates. Anna then corrects her mother when her mother gives her a big piece of meat after first telling Anna that she should not take the big piece.

The mother’s relation to Anna and Martin is to use teasing for corrections to their actions. We see this when Anna drops a piece of bread and when she spills taziki salad, and her mother comments on both events while at the same time grinning, or when she comments on Karla and Martin’s giggling at the table as “kissing.” The mother reacts to the children’s mistakes by teaching them table manners, but the children also turn these situations into demands on the adults, as can be seen when Karla says that in her home they are not allowed to take so much salt on their plate as Martin is doing. The mother supports this and says that too much salt is not healthy, which leads to Martin’s explanation of a little salt as being healthy but too much as being unhealthy.

Last Dinner Observation eight months later

The family sits down at the table. They are having East Indian food, with chicken, rice, fried bananas, peanuts, raisins, and pineapple.

Martin does not take chicken, but he does take rice and peanuts, and he gets ketchup. He is going to start eating. His mother tells Martin to wait to eat until everyone has got food on their plates.

Anna loses a spoon on the floor.

Mother: "It's good I have washed the floor."

Martin: "Can I start eating?"

Mother: "Wait a little."

Martin begins to count down from 10.

Mother: "Do you want to have bananas today, Anna?"

"No," she answers.

Mother: "Please start." But Martin is still counting; he is at eight and continuing to count down to zero, and then says "Fire!"

The father brings up the theme of athletics in school. The mother says, "Let us talk about this later."

Martin: "I have to go out to do a piss."

Mother: "Talk properly."

Martin: "If I feel like it."

Anna says that she remembers something important and leaves the table.

Father: "She should probably write something on her mind board."

Martin comes in with a lamp shade, and says, "Look what I found [in the bathroom]."

Mother: "You can put that back and come and sit down."

The father brings up a topic about an American lady who talked about not showing off. (He uses the Danish concept of "Jante Law").

Martin says thanks for dinner and rises to leave the table.

Mother: "No, you should not leave the table."

Anna comes back to the table and says that they have swimming during the last two hours in school tomorrow. She says she wants to learn to swim.

Martin says that he thinks he can (swim).

Anna says sarcastically: "If this is so, I can too."

Mother: "You have to be fonder of swimming as I understand you did not want to join."

Martin: "I do not want to. Anna can do it instead of me."

Mother: "Then you do not learn to swim."

Anna: "We need to go to the swimming pool more often – we get there just once a year."

Martin stays at the table and starts to ask about getting more peanuts. His mother tells him that he needs to have it with rice, but he has already told everyone that he was finished. This goes on for some time, with Anna now also wanting peanuts. They fuss about how they can share.

Mother: "I miss that you say: "Yes mom", as in the beginning when the researchers' came here."

Martin: "Yes Mom!"

Anna says "Yes Mom!"

Mother: Anna do you want a banana piece?

Anna screams: "Yes Mom!"

Martin screams "No it is too much" when his mother gives him some rice.

Mother: Could we please get the chamber tone!

The father leaves for the kitchen and Martin tries to follow him, but his mother tells him to sit down. Anna is slow to finish eating so her mother tries to hurry her up.

When they all have finished, the children are asked to get into their night clothes. The mother then tells the children that she will read when they all are sitting at the table, and then they all can have some licorice. Anna is supposed to clean the table but because she is slower than

Martin, and he comes back ready in his night clothes and announces he is ready, his mother asks him to do the job instead, which he does. When Anna comes back he says “I cleaned the table for you.”

Anna: “Good, for this is boring.”

Martin: “It is fun.”

Demands for Conduct at the Table

In all dinner observations the whole family sat down together at the table and began eating when everybody was seated and the mother had said “Please start.” Nobody is allowed to leave the table before the mother sees that all have finished their meal, which causes some tension between Martin and his mother. Both children though are allowed to go away and come back, Anna to check some school matters, Martin to go to the toilet. In all our observations table manners are central; the mother is the one who is responsible for ensuring that table manners are followed. The father is the one who often introduces the themes for discussion.

Children’s Initiatives and Conflicts

In this last observation Anna also had a small incident with losing something on the floor, but otherwise she was much the same, and again she corrects her mother, this time by criticizing the family for not going enough to the swim bath. However, Martin objected a lot to his mother’s demands both directly by using improper speech and asking to leave the table several times, and indirectly by his demands for peanuts. So much that Mother asked for a nicer tone at the table.

Martin’s conflicts may be seen as Martin becoming agentic in a new way, as a boy who tries to get a new position. He has moved from grade 0 (the kindergarten class) to grade 1 in school, which means he had developed school competencies, sitting quietly during school time and started to learn math and to read. At the first visits to the family he would often sit on his mother’s or father’s lap when he had finished eating. We have several examples from the breakfast settings where he sits on his mother’s lap before they leave for school, but this changed after he started his second year in school and he became “a real school child.” In general even at this last dinner observation he is not in opposition to his mother’s demands. Here he rose at once when his mother asked him to set the table, and later

he did Anna's job, when the mother asked, so it is not that he is cross with his mother – it seems more that he was trying out a new social position of being more independent and taking initiatives.

Cultural Learning at the dinner table

The mealtime can be seen as related to how a community shares general values and motives for being together at the evening meal, as pointed out by Korvela et al. (2007). In Scandinavia as well as in Italy (Pontecorvo, Fausolo, & Sterponi, 2001), we find values about the practice of sharing dinner. Children become socialized (Aronsson & Forsberg, 2009, Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011, Nairn, 2012) around the dinner table to orient to what is important. How parents orient their children both depends on the pressure they have from other chores, the age of the children, and what the parents actually see as important in the upbringing of their children. The parents in the Vanløse family appreciate the togetherness at the mealtime as they formulated in relation to their photos. The analyses of the Vanløse family show how the parents used the dinner setting as an important site for learning manners (cf. Aronsson & Gottzén, 2011), and as opportunities to learn healthy eating habits (Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996), as when they in the Vanløse family had a discussion of eating salt. In the Vanløse family the food that was served was not especially children's food, even though it was modified in relation to them. They were served steaks and Indian curry.

In this family we saw how table manners went two ways both as children learning to be at the table, but also the parents learning what children expect from them (i.e., being consistent in their care) as pointed out by Pontecorvo et al. (2001). In the first dinner observation, the mother wanted to be nice to Anna and gave her the big piece of lamb steak though she just have said that she should not take the big piece. Anna commented on this and asked why her mother was not consistent. In the last presented dinner observation both children teased and opposed their Mother, so she asked for a nicer tone at the table.

To learn table manners and values about eating I will interpret as cultural learning, because it is as much an acquisition of values and motive orientation as it is acquiring competences to act in situated practices. This learning goes both from parent to children but also from children to parent, that have to learn handle children's opposition, so a good tone is kept at the table.

When we look at what Martin found important to take photos of we found that several were related to school (i.e., school friends, school interior and school building). In the observation period Martin oriented towards school grew. Therefor Martin's obstruction toward especially his mother is in-

terpreted as a claim for new position at home that fits with his change in school of becoming a “first grader” and not a “kindergarten class child” any more.

Following Vygotsky (1998), change in children’s development may lead to obstruction of relations to the child’s social world for a new developmental period to emerge, where new relations are created. In line with Bozhovich (2009), I will argue that change in a child’s position in an institutional practice influences the way the child orient in relation to other persons. This change can be followed in the children’s relation to persons in all the different institutions they attend, which means in Martin’s case that his relations to his parents and sister at home could be seen as changing.

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Domesticating Markets: Early-Years Education and Middle-class Parenting in India

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Introduction

Over the last two decades much has been written about India's new middle classes and their lifestyles, but little attention has been paid to the way liberalisation policies and the attending neoliberal ideology is transforming the family. In this chapter I will discuss some of the changes pertaining to the way children are brought up in this social strata based on two decades of fieldwork in Calcutta/Kolkata, India.

This chapter provides an ethnographically-based perspective on middle-class parenting and argues that where in China extensive government intervention, and in Malaysia Islamist agendas frame the reordering of the social world of early childhood under processes of globalisation (see Stivens 1998; Naftali 2010), in India economic liberalisation and neoliberal ideology shape the same processes. This is the case even where they are introduced as part of a right-wing Hindutva (Hindu way of life) agenda (see Benei 2008) and they affect middle-class children and their families in multiple ways. More specifically, the chapter shows, how the middle-class family becomes a prime site where neoliberal values are reproduced and enacted in relation to new government agendas and economic conditions.

With reference to Bengal, the role of formal education in the establishment of specific ideals of being middle-class and therefore modernity is closely related to reconfigurations of the family through ideologies pertaining to motherhood during the colonial period. Appropriate femininities played a key role in the teachings of Hindu reformers concerned about the lifestyles of the emerging middle-class, and thus nationalist discourses highlighted the importance of mothers as emblems of Indian womanhood (Bagchi 1990; Chatterjee 1993; Walsh 1995; Sangari 1999; Kumar n.d.). In post-independence India the link between middle-class identities, schooling and parenting became even more accentuated. As the idealised and educated middle-class mother was opposed to the undesirable motherhood of the poor, middle-class parenting became a matter of upward mobility and the reproduction of inequality and therefore education (Beteille 2001; Sen 2014).

As I have argued elsewhere, the post-liberalisation period has seen a sharp rise in emphasis on women as mothers (Donner 2008), this time as educators of future consumer-citizens. This is partly achieved by a mother's focus on education, and a renewed emphasis on maternal roles in relation to the transmission of culture.

Kumar suggests with reference to literature on childhood and education in South Asia, that mothers are absent due to the 'unattractiveness of certain spaces inhabited by women', which 'lies in the categories themselves: 'mother', 'home', 'childcare', versus 'intelligentsia', 'the nation', 'education' (Kumar, n.d). Whilst prominent in the writings on childhood per se, parenting is generally not seen as productive of class and inequality (see for example Kakar 1979 and 1981; Vashanti 2003 for general approaches to childhood in India). This chapter addresses this lacuna by focusing on a group present in writings about the middle-class more generally, namely Bengali-speaking middle-class families in Calcutta/Kolkata, whose parenting trajectories from the colonial period onwards (see for example Bose 1995).⁴ Focusing on early-years education I will discuss how the ongoing processes of globalisation, locally enabled from the 90s onwards by economic liberalisation, the emergence of a consumerist culture associated with global lifestyles, and the attending neoliberal ideologies, have brought change to families. Since the families I study are middle-class families and education plays a major role in suitably modern middle-class personhood, I am focusing on early years education as a site that allows us to understand the transformation of childhood under new economic and social conditions. My argument is that in this context, the early years of childhood have taken on new, and very significant meaning, which can best be described as the extension of economic logics and the importance of 'markets' to encompass all spheres of life, beginning with the parent-child relationship. In the wake of liberalisation education has become fully commodified and having gained access to private education, a process that middle-class parents embrace and describe through neoliberal idioms of choice and merit, the contestations that come with it causes extreme anxiety. In this chapter I will discuss how the production of global Indian citizens starts with preschool education, a novel and spreading practice that is changing the roles of the family members, but especially the role of mothers. Thus, let me sketch the historical and cultural context within which these transformations are situated.

⁴ The data stems from two decades of work in Calcutta/Kolkata, India's most Eastern metropolis. My interlocutors belong mostly to Bengali-speaking backgrounds, and my research focused on women and their families. The main bulk of my data stems from the mid-90s to early 2000s and was collected during extended periods of fieldwork using participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Some follow-up visits allowed me to update the material. I have only conducted a few interviews with staff in two schools my son attended whilst we were staying in Kolkata.

Contextualising Early Years

Child-centred pedagogies, and therefore extensive advice for parenting, can be traced back to Western, bourgeois ideals of childhood as a period of innocence, spent in the family home – the site of ‘true’ relationships. Today embellished with attending ideas about developmental phases and psychological understandings of relationships between parents and children, such idealised imagers are often superimposed on indigenous models. However, Indian folk models depict early childhood as a phase of carefree enjoyment, and identify logical steps in the maturation of children, which match such pedagogies in popular consciousness (Kakar 1979). Based on ideas the introduction of formal schooling for middle-class boys and - gradually – girls childhood among the Bengali middle-class changed from the middle of the 19th century onwards (Roy 1995). But according to my elderly informants and historical research early childhood was until very recently still devoted to play and socialisation in the family home (Roy 1972). Clearly distinguished from the extremely rigid regime imposed on schoolchildren, at home younger members of extended families were mostly left to their own devices and enjoyed the attention of multiple carers, including grandparents, older siblings, and servants.

But more recently, this picture changed drastically from the 1980s onwards, when Kolkata’s Bengali-speaking middle class came under pressure as the much coveted secure employment in the public sector began to dwindle, and privatisation reshaped formal education. Significantly, parents now feel that English-medium education, earlier a privilege of the upper middle-class elite, which had been abolished by the ruling Left Front in state primary schools, is a precondition for even less prestigious jobs. By the 1990s, all middle-class parents I spoke to were adamant that their children needed English language skills to gain employment, and all but the most disenfranchised parents agreed that early years education would provide the basis of English-medium schooling (Donner 2005). It was during that decade that private nursery schools teaching some basic English and other kinds of ‘modern’ attributes parents imagined would provide competitive advantages mushroomed all over the city. As will become clear, these nurseries, or ‘Montessoris’ are representative of an assortment of neoliberal ideas, shared between those founding and running the nurseries and the parents. They are, I argue indicators of the change in middle-class lifestyles, aspirations and values. Invested with parental hopes for children’s success in a competitive educational system, they function as institutional nodes for the association of the family and neoliberal ideologies.

The households we are concerned with here are usually extended, with more than one couple sharing

living space and finances and women working together in the home. Even where an adolescent lives today in a nuclear family, they are likely to have spent some years in a joint family.⁵ Before 1990, children entered formal schooling only once they were between 4 and 6 years of age. Today most middle-class urbanites send their kids to pre-school, which may take pupils after their second birthday. Contrary to what has been reported in other contexts, neither the joint family nor nurseries are a matter of childcare (pace Fuller and Narasimhan 2013), as mothers are not usually in employment. Secondly, the vast majority of children spend their early years in a joint family with more than one female household member looking after them, and such ‘shared parenting’ is seen as highly desirable. Early years education is here clearly related to shifting parental aspirations, as the skills it enables are seen as predisposition for employment in very specific kinds of global workplaces. Furthermore, liberalisation has also brought wider cultural shifts, and the Indian middle-class today identifies with a transnational lifestyle and often the dream of migrant fortunes. These new trajectories require different and novel personal traits to support claims to middle-class status, for example confidence, English-language skills and computer literacy, but above all a degree of engagement with individualism as a value. Lastly, there is the commodification of educational institutions and the proliferation of certificates to be taken into account. All these factors, I argue have changed the way early childhood is conceptualised and experienced by children and their carers in Indian middle-class families.

Experiencing the Educational Environment

While walking down the road in Central Kolkata, my three-year-old son remarked ‘This place is full of school children’ and pointed at groups of pupils at the gates of a Central Calcutta nursery school. But equally conspicuous were their mothers, who can be found sitting next to the gates of schools, standing in the shade of a nearby tree, or are waiting for their offspring to emerge from examination centres. Mothers can be seen in the morning on the way to school, and afterwards, when those who travelled from further a field delivered pre-schoolers for morning sessions, while away the time gossiping on the steps of a shop. They reappear in the afternoon to collect children, hurrying home before going put again to deliver their kids to a tuition, music or computer lesson later in the evening. If this is a city of school children, it is equally a city of their mothers, who relate to this ‘educational

⁵Guilmoto summarizes the debates on family change and highlights recent demographic trends (Guilmoto 2011). The shift from joint to nuclear families among a modernizing urban middle-class and its implications for child-rearing has been discussed in detail by Seymour in the context of 1980s urban Orissa (1999). However, pervasive economic, regional and communal differences mean that Kolkata’s Bengali-speaking middle-class families are still often adhering to patrilocality and multi-generation households.

environment' (Jeffery *et al.* 2005.) and have to constantly adjust to the changes education is undergoing in the post-liberalisation period.

Schooling has for long played a role in the way that early childhood was conceptualised since middle-class Indian families came under the spell of reform in the 19th century. During the colonial period, formal education for boys became the norm, whilst girls' mass education only really took off in the 1920s (Engels 1996). Whilst all the mothers in my interlocutors' homes had attended school, the degree to which schooling was supported by the family varied, and some had to leave after class 10.

Speaking to mothers and grandmothers of adolescents in the mid-90s, early childhood had in their view been an important period of socialisation, explicitly achieved at home and within a family environment. In the accounts older women provided on their own schooling careers, school presented a desirable – and often still contested – achievement in many families, but also became a serious concern in later childhood. Early childhood was constructed as liminal, explicitly idealised where it occurred in a multi-generational, 'joint' family that shared a residence with collaterally-related households. Furthermore, parents never fail to mention that the city boasts some of the country's finest secondary schools, and that the Bengali middle-class sees itself as particularly well educated. However, a few notable vernacular schools aside, provision for those not able to join prestigious schools was often rather poor up until the 90s. Thus, a sharp divide prevailed between those with access to the few elite English-medium schools, who would join prestigious universities, and those educated in the vernacular, whose best possible option would have been 'service', work for the government.

Today pressure on middle-class parents to provide their children with new types of knowledge has increased. Pre-schools, which became conduits of these changes, were first introduced by the state to help poor pupils in the transition to primary schools (Rana *et al.* 2002; Sreeranjana *et al.* n.d.). However, gradually throughout the 1990s the idea of pre-schooling in privately run 'nurseries' began to encompass middle-class imaginations. Today, teachers and parents like the ones I work with have come to see early childhood as a prime period within a framework of 'developmental stages', and though critical, adopt this rationale for early-years education.

The notion that children should be shaped early on is of course not new. Although folk models associate few traits beyond parental social status with young children as such, life in middle-class families was from the 19th century onwards marked by pedagogical intervention. How to bring up suitably modern sons (and later on daughters), and the notion that mothers need to be educated in order to do so, is well-established (Walsh 1995; Bose 1995). Within this discourse early childhood figured as a

period when parents ought to foster very close emotional bonds with their children, and mothers were to model positive values to be inculcated in the ‘perfect Indian child’. Today, early childhood is presented as a phase during which children are particularly susceptible to acquiring discipline and ‘manners’ – necessary for making a successful middle-class pupil. Determined by the ever present spectre of failure (see Kumar 2011) educational choices are seen as the most important responsibilities of parents. In middle-class discourses, such choices are related directly to new ideas about aspirational regimes, which link the personality of the child to status and future mobility for the family (Sancho 2012). Just as it was the parents’ duty to develop a child and nurture their abilities, today the same parents are asked to create a successful citizen through an early focus on academic performance (Sen 2014). Extending the age old idiom of maternal sacrifice, mothers agree that in today’s competitive urban educational landscape, one of the sacrifices to be made is sole control over a child’s development.

The Pre-School Environment

All Indian middle-class parents, just as many middle-class parents across the globe, fret and worry endlessly about schooling – often from the day a child starts to walk. With entry into a ‘big’ school constituting the moment when successful parenting is confirmed, the preparations for that day start early on in the home. Regardless of household income and set-up, admission of a son or daughter to a school of choice is a major labour of love, even where money places no obstacles in the way. To enhance the chances of success, two-year old boys and girls were enrolled in pre-schools, some locally and others in well-known larger institutions further afield.

A good number of children from more affluent homes had been practising for the ‘tests’, but mothers across the board assumed that at the tender age of two few truly academic means would be employed. In the school my son attended the headmistress was meant to place particular importance on independence and children not being tutored. This did not stop parents from purchasing primers intended to teach basic skills, which were usually counting up and identifying colours and animals in English.

Here as at primary level, a standardised and highly bureaucratic procedure was implied, with mothers frequently queuing for hours to collect admission forms. In some cases parents would be able to then ‘put down’ the name of the child against payment of a deposit, in others they would sign their children up for an interview.

Although only a few ‘reputed’ Montessori nurseries in Calcutta are oversubscribed, admission to non-selective, mostly local kindergartens, emulates procedures of prestigious schools. To parents enrolment itself was a major effort and successful admission represented a rite of passage. In the case of prestigious kindergarten’s or the newly emerging nursery sections of sought after schools, the process also involve bribes and the cultivation of patron-client relationships.

But most parents choose small establishments situated in a residential unit with large classes of up to 30 two-year olds in one group. They are usually run by a female founder/proprietor, although there are some upmarket franchises. Whilst their quality varies, they promise to teach children basic academic skills, mainly the three Rs and English vocabulary, as well as preparation for interviews in ‘big’ schools. However, interviews are ‘sat’ between the ages of three and five, and only selective schools expect good ‘Montessori’ nursery education. But even less competitive schools ask their prospective pupils to come for a test during which they may be asked to produce English phrases, alphabets, numbers and songs as part of the admission procedure. Whilst this functional aspect of nursery education is highlighted by parents, longer conversations offer other, more complex explanations for the rise of early-years education. They mention old-fashioned the ‘civilising’ agents of discipline and obedience, but they are also keen on ‘development’ and ‘maturity’ associated with the notion of ‘exposure’.

Where a son or daughter was admitted for preschool education depended on three factors: the financial circumstances of the household, the place of residence, and the ethnic identity of the parents. Fees in selective institutions varied between 700 and 1200 rupees per month at the beginning of the 2000s, whereas many local ‘Montessori’ schools located in the garage of an apartment building or the spare rooms of a family home charged less than 500 rupees. Both types may offer different ‘classes’ for each grade, and the age of admission can be as low as eighteen months. In both settings, prospective students are carefully screened with a view to economic and ethnic homogeneity, but depending on the location, neighbourhood ‘Montessori schools’ can nevertheless be mixed, so that local shop keepers, doctors and the children of teachers may attend the same preschool for a while. Preschools may or may not employ trained teachers but always have helpers (*ayahs*) to deal with children’s physical needs.

When speaking to parents about nursery education it is apparent that Indian pre-schools are in the business of creating global – and assumedly transferable - experiences of education. These are modelled on ideals of schooling associated with US, Europe and South East Asia, and are consumed by all newly entitled middle-class consumers. Because pre-schools stand for a global lifestyle that middle-class Indians are aspiring to or tie in with, these playschools emphasise their cosmopolitan character, and unlike proper schools they do not display any Indian national symbols like flags or por-

traits of nationalist leaders and ‘indigenous’ educationists. Pre-schooling is very clearly about tapping into what is represented as a ‘global’ middle-class lifestyle, and this also implies that in a setting where subtle signifiers of ethnic and religious community are present in almost every context, no identifiable communal or Indian imagery is associated with pre-school education in these urban settings.⁶ The reality of such markers of class-based appropriations of a global form, does however also speak of intra-class differentiation. Although English as medium of instruction is highlighted in the way all the nurseries present themselves, the knowledge of staff might be limited and in less prestigious places children may not be exposed to much regular teaching in English. All nurseries are using vernacular languages as well, for example when *ayas* (lower class helpers) deal with children. As teaching at this level is not standardised, many teachers do hold language degrees in Bengali, but may not have been trained in English-medium environments themselves. But the nurseries manage to tie in with the demand for globalised cultural discourses by using signifiers of global culture, for example in names like Little Angles, Morning Glory, Blooming Rose or Playhouse Montessori, which act as markers of an English medium orientation. Furthermore, indicating ‘fun’ and ‘playful learning’, the sites draw on similar imagery – the walls are adorned with popular cartoon characters and English alphabets and number charts. Another global reference is the display of foreign-made or counterfeit toys and books which nurseries never fail to show parents and visitors as ‘equipment’ to emphasise their pedagogic program.

The Ideal of the Committed Mother

The novel practice of pre-schooling and the resulting ‘common sense’ that nurseries are useful for children can only be attributed to the wider narratives that are related to the way education is perceived today. In many conversations it became clear that with admission to preschool, middle-class parents and in particular mothers feel that they are involved in the wider project of producing global graduates - Indian white collar workers for a global market. Much has been written about the way neoliberal values, apparent in talk about choice, self-improvement and market mechanisms, are key to envisage, represent and condition these new subjects. In the Indian context, the imagery of small children going to nursery, being trained in English and computer skills, and being removed from the home environment in order to be ‘exposed’, has all the makings of a neoliberal reframing of childhood. Nurseries are therefore prime sites for the production of such global Indian citizens, and tie in with trends to reform the family found elsewhere, for instance in China (Rofel 1994; Anagnost n.d.; Zhao and Murdock 1996; Fernandes 2000; Donner 2005). In this section, I will analyse how the re-

⁶ This is markedly different in provincial contexts, where religious and nationalist symbols may be present.

production of the related values relies on preschool education, and subjects mothers and children to the related disciplining regimes.

The changes that the introduction of early-years education has brought about affect all members of the family, but mothers are more involved in managing the new field of schooling than others. I have written elsewhere on how globalisation and the changing educational strategies employed by the middle-class in India contest and challenge the way intra-household relationships are conducted and understood (Donner 2005).

Like Malaysian middle-class mothers studied by Stivens (1998), Bengali middle-class mothers compare their own parenting practices with supposedly 'Western' ways. This opposition dates back to the colonial period, when nationalist discourses and regional variations on the theme of motherhood produced a distinct modernist version of 'traditional motherhood' in Bengal (Bagchi 1990:65).

But while institutional childcare was earlier associated with negative cultural stereotypes, 'nurseries' are today seen as markers of distinction. Earlier, those same families referred to these institutions as 'unsuitable for Indian families/children'. However, those from similar backgrounds would today send her children to nurseries 'study'. The ambivalence, still very much at the fore in the 1990s, has given way to a more or less complete embrace of preschool.

It is clear from what has been said before that nurseries represent novel ideas about education, but this does not necessarily imply a radical break with older ideas. Some of the owners are well-trained, like the head of my son's nursery, who prided herself of 'real' Montessori training abroad. Consequently, she was quite cynical about parental expectations as well as the level of pedagogic involvement in other nurseries. However, mixed in with her general liberal and pedagogically-framed outlook were distinctively Indian footnotes, which came to the fore when we were talking about admission procedures. Like other teachers I met, she argued that strict admission procedures, a rigid schedule and attention to even minute details in the behaviour of pupils was a must, as 'Indian children' were not usually brought up to cope with 'non-domestic environments'. In line with common ideas, the alleged lack of discipline was a result of joint family life, where mothers shunned responsibility and children were spoilt by competing caretakers. She asserted that demographic change, and the new affluence of the 1990s had transformed that caring environment into a space for consumerist indulgence. And finally, she explained what she was looking for in the 'interview' with 'confidence' a major virtue:

'In the interview I am looking for a well-rounded child—, I show them this pencil holder here for

example, and say ‘this is a key’ and wait how they react, and if they react—if they shake their head or if they say no, then that is a good sign. I ask them ‘what have you had for breakfast?’ and if they say chicken then that is a good sign... ()...Of course you cannot expect a two-year old to say much, what can you see in a two-year old—but I rarely make a mistake, I can tell. In general I am looking for a well-adjusted child, not for one clinging to his mummy ...’

Given the rigid admission procedures, self-help books provide guidance for parents who feel under scrutiny and want to know what to expect during interviews. These manuals also bridge the gap between older ways of thinking about education which link parenting and civil virtues and the new demands of a competitive marketplace:

‘An ordinary child with average intelligence and initiative, when treated with respect and dignity as an individual, and is given proper guidance & motivation by you, will turn out to be a great citizen. Here comes the best gift you can give to your child: the most wanted qualities of the 21st century’ (Jain 2000:9).

The author then provides a list of fifty traits ranging from pride to sincerity, and from courtesy to love for nature. The accompanying text emphasises that parents ‘cannot expect overnight results’ but will have to ‘spend endless hours, months, years together with hard work, sleepless nights and total dedication’ to make a child a success (Jain 2000:19). Bringing this project back home, the author asserts that tests and interviews are in the interest of the school and the child, because the authorities ‘have to assess in what type of environment the child is growing and how much committed you are towards your child’. But, ‘no matter how much committed, and sincere the teachers are, it is the parent’s commitment and sincerity towards the child’s education that plays the most effective role as the child spends most of the time with his/her parents’ (Jain 2000:20). Finally, parents are asked to be ‘very frank and let them know exactly how much intelligent (sic) your child is. And please don’t tell us, that you don’t know, as that will clearly indicate that you haven’t given proper time to your child.’ is the slightly threatening advice provided for parents (Jain 2000:20).

Whilst the authors of such manuals are not known to the parents, far from being regarded as naïve or misleading, such books reflect popular ideas about the role of parents in early childhood today. Mothers in particular are cast as facilitators of future success. Although the home-environment of a child is checked in interviews with both parents, fathers attending the ‘interview’ for admission are assumed to engage with their children’s ‘education’ as part of their leisure pursuits. Mothers, on the

other hand, cannot get away that easily, as their role in the education of children is changing drastically in line with neoliberal ideas about the person, interviews have become quite tricky. Firstly, they are asked about employment, which may go in their favour where mother is a doctor, but which will be seen as problematic with less prestigious jobs. Teachers will ask direct questions like ‘When do you come home at night?’; ‘Who cooks for your child and feeds her?’ to express their concern about the degree of commitment displayed by a working mother. Only teachers and doctors are much-sought after brides, as they are expected to be able to combine maternal commitment with professional experience. As one of the mothers explained: ‘I was a teacher and all my sisters-in-law are teachers, you see, my in-laws were very keen that the women should be well-educated so that they can help their kids with the homework’.

Apart from employment, the interviews at preschool level explore domestic relationships which are expected to have an impact on a child’s schooling. Since siblings are increasingly rare, teachers direct their interest in social skills by zooming in on the presence of grandparents and servants in the home. Both sets of relationships may in the view of the mothers involve different moralities—grandparents are loving carers who have rights and are often seen as co-carers, though increasingly less worthy, whereas servants may be loving but represent a potentially bad influence. Where it would have been entirely acceptable a generation of two ago that a servant delivered a child to school and that a grandfather took responsibility for a child’s schooling, ‘other people at home’ and the presence of grandparents at the gates or a servant picking up a child is today often interpreted as an indicator of neglect by a mother. In the new millennium, co-parenting is not promoted as a positive force in schooling as mothers are expected to act as intermediaries between the school and the home and become practically involved in every aspect of the education of their children. Where a mother does not appear at the gates daily, she is quickly cast as unmindful or worse and her child might be seen as problematic in turn.

This moral judgement meted out to mothers is significant, as it ideologically constructs the parent-child relationship as exclusive in a setting where a nuclear family may be the exception and residential patterns differ over time (see Seymour 1999). But as one Montessori teacher argued ‘Parents have to work with the children at home—we expect them to do the homework themselves, but you can always help that with reading, writing and little number games—after all parents know what the child needs and wants.’ Here, as in many other cases, the discursive construction of a child’s needs is linked exclusively to the parental bond, and in particular the mother, even if homework is set by the school in the first place and arguably a grandparent might be equally well-equipped to help with it. And, where it was earlier sufficient for a middle-class mother to be fairly educated, it is today necessary to buy into a whole set of ideas that highlight the parent-child unit as the main force of social

and economic advancement for the family. Thus, mothers are expected to utilise the readily available labour power of servants and grandmothers, but these roles are to be channelled towards the more 'mundane' tasks in the house. In theory at least, only the mother and her child are involved in schooling, and the mother is encouraged to devote her day to school-related activities even where children spent the majority of hours either at school or at tuition.

The ideological construction of an exclusive mother-child bond in relation to education does furthermore diminish maternal input to that of a facilitator for smooth transactions between the many players in a child's education. Far from being lightweight in terms of commitment and effort, mothers are kept on their toes with constant demands and errands created by the school, many of which pose a challenge to those in employment. Furthermore, it is during these years that the values of maternal care and intimacy between mother and child are redirected away from the home environment. By ignoring other carers, the institution enforces the global imagery it tries to project and frames mothers in relation to schooling as most significant others. This exclusive relationship is often embraced by mothers, who might complain about the fact their children won't 'work' by themselves or with anyone else, but use this argument to gain more control in a joint family setting.

'She will not learn anything with her father, she doesn't listen to what her grandmother says, and anyway, the old lady has no idea about Montessori education, the numbers games etc.—I am the only one, with whom she would study—and I am worried what will happen once she joins 'big' school and has to attend tuition classes' is a common refrain, here articulated by the mother of a four-year-old girl.

Unlike the 'culture of care' (Hochschild 2003) emerging in China or many Western countries, and even other cities and communities in India, the vast majority of Bengali-speaking middle-class mothers are housewives (see for Fuller and Narasimhan (2013) for a different example). Here, as in the case of some European countries, modern motherhood implies the withdrawal of women as mothers from paid work,⁷ and my interlocutors were more often than not proud to not need to seek employment. Thus, whilst a discourse on women's engagement in paid employment forms an important part of debates about liberalisation and its effects, jobs are largely confined to young women (see Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008).

⁷ Among middle-class women voluntary retirement schemes in the wake of liberalisation attracted working mothers : 'A tidy sum in the form of a golden handshake, time that one could finally call one's own, a more leisurely lifestyle and the option of working a few hours a day from the home were attractive propositions. At least the children would get better attention.' (Bose: 2003).

In spite of this, Bengali middle-class families, like most middle-class families in India, rely heavily on domestic workers, who perform a wide range of tasks related to childcare in the home. Concerns about servants feature large in the literature on 19th century reform (see Walsh 1995) and children in middle-class homes are socialised into their status through the experience of domestic work (Quayum and Ray 2011), whilst concerns are re-iterated in popular media on a daily basis. However, in more affluent families, very young children are routinely looked after dedicated domestic workers (often adolescents), whose main responsibility is the feeding, bodily care and physical surveillance of a toddler. The management of servants, a crucial task of mothers in these families, is also a site upon which teachers regularly dispense advice. This is internalised by mothers, who on the topic of relationships between servants and children, emphasise their ‘responsible’ ‘use’ of labour. As Sneha, mother of a three-year-old recognised, the presence of servants in the home might compromise the demand for the ‘right environment’:

‘As I go along I decide what she can do and what she can’t do, and obviously with my daughter going to school now there is less for her to do—she cannot read and playing with a four-year-old is more demanding than the earlier stages. It is fine as long as the children cannot really speak, but after that you have to be careful, because they will pick up foul language from them, and I don’t want that.’.

This brief passage reflects concerns raised by teachers and mothers alike, and highlights implicit assumptions about childhood and developmental stages as well as class relations, which are all mediated by the mother-child relationship.

Whilst concerns about language are not new, the importance given to educational games and knowledge about child development is of very recent origin and ties in with ideas about ‘all-round’, ‘wholistic’ and ‘pedagogically’ useful pastimes. Manual engagement with the world, on the other hand, is not encouraged, and increasingly IT-related activities take the place of games and picture books enjoyed at home.

In my research it was clear that child-rearing is seen by mothers themselves as status production work (Papanek 1989:103), and that mothers construct raising appropriately middle-class children in terms of a professional relationship, with knowledge acquired in routinized ways and employed in a strategic fashion to enable ‘results’. In order for their engagement to be successful their domestic environment must be adjusted to the task at hand as well, and this has required a significant reordering of ‘home’ as the ‘world’ changes.

Pedagogising the Domestic Environment

In this section I will discuss how pre-schooling promotes a focus on the parental bond through discourses on a variety of knowledge and practices. Although in my conversations with mothers as well as teachers the emphasis on the domestic environment and how it can support schooling was diffuse and often contradictory, but it did usually general critique what the domestic environment usually looked like, and focused specifically on two main areas, namely English language acquisition and food consumption. Both are arenas that play a huge role in the local construction of middle-class identity (Donner 2008a; 2008b) and mark class as well as ethnic and religious differences in this multicultural setting.

With reference to the acquisition of language skills, the complex 'English medium education' did reference a range of practices mothers felt schools now asked them to engage 'actively' in. These included educational games and the like, and some articulated their concern about these new demands which they felt they were not well equipped for, whilst others felt that they were unnecessary.

Generally speaking, whilst homework is not usually set for pre-schoolers, mothers are reminded by nursery teachers that they should spend time on 'useful' activities at home to support their children's development. Many of these do today include explicitly pedagogical pursuits, for example word games in English. Interestingly, it was never stated that grandparents should take on that responsibility, instead teachers would caution against the influence of family members, who they argued may not be as committed to the individual child's education: 'It is you, who has to ensure that a two-year old is learning the English numbers, while the child herself may want to go upstairs and play hide-and-seek with the grandmothers' Tanuka's mother was reminded by a teacher when she picked up her child from nursery.

Many mothers were concerned about these demands on their time and worried that they lacked the knowledge to provide such apparently necessary kinds of engagement. These concerns stemmed mostly from the fact that they felt such activities could only be conducted and appropriately understood with a command of English. Given the close relationship between intra-class differences and English medium education it is hardly surprising that mothers who do not speak English feel inferior when confronted with ideas clearly related to upper middle-class educational formats. Thus, mothers mentioned that, whilst they were aware of the need to employ new methodologies like 'playful' learning, they worried about having to use educational resources, in particular English books, and

media. However, in practice the demands made by schools did usually not exceed young children performing simple English rhymes and the alphabets, numbers and commercial jingles.

Whilst English was coded positively, the fact that as Viruru points out, many schools in urban India are multilingual environments (Viruru 2001:134–136) was not seen as an asset by mothers or teachers alike. In some nurseries, teachers claimed that vernacular languages were banned or only used for ‘extra-curricular activities’ whilst English was reserved for ‘study’ purposes. At home the way English-medium preschooling was understood varied with the background and individual capability of mothers, most of whom expected their children to become confident in using English phrases and expressions by repeating them to them. But more importantly, very young children were encouraged to learn English by watching children’s programmes on TV, which was among all mothers seen as a valuable educational resource for pre-schoolers.

Thus, the nursery environment was clearly marked as a place where vernacular languages needed to be disciplined, had no practical value in relation to schooling and were not supported because they were ‘second best’. The acquisition of English, was, on the other hand, approached as a *skill* and seen in rather functionalist terms. Seen as related to numeracy, literacy, and IT skills it had to be actively pursued. In this context the ‘work’ mothers would ideally envisage themselves doing would involve activities centred on training materials related to these areas of learning. Some households had a computer, but in all cases children were given a supply of small books and games to enhance literacy and numeracy skills, practice colour charts and instil simple moral messages in English. Most of these ‘teaching aids’ resembled textbooks in the way they were compiled and laid-out. In this setting, parents took the position of a teacher supervising the ‘work’ done by the child, and they are very didactical, as this example shows:

‘The child is more interested in playing rather than in studying. Hence it is very difficult for the parents to prepare him or her for school admission. Keeping this fact in mind this book includes study materials for your child which help in playing and learning at the same time.’ (Karn 2003:V).

Where mothers themselves had attended English-medium schools ‘learning English’ was slightly more broadly conceived. Thus, they would also try and teach children tales and increasingly story-books related to TV serials and movies to make learning English fun. In these households children were more often than not never expected to read in the vernacular. Furthermore, spin-offs of Disney productions were popular as well. Teaching the preschool child English at home does therefore include familiarity with a set of narratives and artefacts largely identified with ‘Western’ consumer

culture, which mothers introduce as part of the preschool system.

Next to concerns about English-language education, the preparation and consumption of food plays a crucial role in the way Bengali middle-class family life is subjected to new discourses.

At nursery stage, the *tiffin* (lunchbox) presented a second important arena for parenting to be assessed.⁸ Whilst pre-schooler only spent a couple of hours at school, even this short period warranted a snack. Mothers were very concerned with issues around those meals. Here as elsewhere, conversations about children's eating habits and their preferences, aversions and daily routines, are of utmost importance to most mothers.

As pre-school is in many ways a test run for big school, the content of the lunchbox is taken very seriously, and provides the stuff of endless discussions at the school gates. It is a continuation of such conversations about children, exchanges with teachers, and tales of love and betrayal between mothers and their children. Often when children were picked up from nursery school I overheard a mother asking her child: 'Did you have your tiffin?' On opening the container she would then turn around to a wider audience and continue 'I don't know what to do, he never finishes his lunch'. Here as elsewhere, conversations about children's eating habits and their preferences, aversions and daily routines, are of utmost importance to most mothers.

In Bengali households in particular, the preparation and consumption of full meals represents the hallmark of a distinctive Bengali domesticity, and 'Bengali cooking' features as the most distinctive indicator of ethnicity among the middle-classes.⁹ Just as in the case of Stivens' study of the Malay middle-classes, the domestication of middle-class mothers within a nationalist discourses relies on a 'cuisine' promoted as part of class-specific child-rearing practices (Stivens 1998:62).

In Bengali middle-class families and in some cases in Hindi-speaking families as well, children's tastes in foods are taken very seriously, and are actively developed by mothers and grandmothers. Once a son or daughter enters school the preparation of a lunch box (*tiffin*) becomes a major signifier of 'good mothering'. For nurseries, these lunch boxes are matter of concern and are a prime area for the imposition of discipline—via discourses on practicality, hygiene, and cleanliness.

Even the small neighbourhood nurseries made it a point to send notes regarding suitable foods and the right packaging home with the students, and teachers emphasised that with respect to lunch boxes all mothers, regardless of economic standing or education, were irresponsible and unreasonable. In

⁸ Allison (1991) provides an interesting comparative perspective on the compulsion to send lunchboxes with Japanese pupils. In the given context it is the content, not the aesthetics, which serves as an indicator of identity.

⁹ Janeja provides a detailed discussion on how 'everyday' food is constructed as productive of Bengali persons and culture (Janeja 2009).

return, many mothers I spoke to displayed contempt for the nurseries policies regarding food, and subverted the attempts to impose order in the school environment by sending ‘inappropriate amounts’ and ‘unsuitable food’ on a daily basis into the preschool. I would like to suggest that far from being a mere boycott of the nursery’s teachers this attitude can be read as a refusal to accept the school’s messages about good and reasonable mothering and probably also contests the need for education outside the home at this young age.

When a son or daughter entered school, mothers often felt that their loving and controlled ‘education of the senses’ was disrupted. Furthermore, they had to rearrange the whole routine around the lunch taken in the nursery. Anxieties about social status, urban environments, and the contaminating effects of modernity, which are translated into negative discourses about eating ‘outside’ more generally, were implied in talk about lunch taken at school. One major concern was the widespread and very culturally appropriate fear of contamination, which was raised in discussions through debates on where, when and with whom lunch was taken at school. The children I spoke to did often see lunch as enjoyable occasion for chat, mucking about and for complicated exchange relationships. The mothers, on the other hand, saw this arrangement in terms of contamination, social boundaries and adequate care: they worried about the cleanliness of staff, the floor and mats, the ability of different children to feed themselves (many Bengali children are fed by hand until at least three years of age). But most importantly, they worried about inter-community interaction and the resulting food contamination, which needs to be understood as a ritual, rather than hygienic concept deeply embedded in South Asian ideologies.¹⁰

Although teachers acknowledged that children needed a snack and depicting lunchtime as an important opportunity to teach children manners, sharing and tidiness, they felt that a nursery could not channel the various meanings of food and the related maternal transgressions very well. Moreover, increasing consumerism tended to aggravate the problem of lunch boxes through the introduction of new, and in the view of teachers highly competitive, foods, marketed by multinational companies. Teachers and mothers alike felt that such foods, starting with the ubiquitous Maggi instant noodles, made the children greedy and seemed to contain inappropriate messages about being a child related to consumption. However, over the last twenty years huge number of processed and commercially available foods associated with new middle-class lifestyles have entered homes and schools. Today, even very young middle-class children demand snacks advertised on TV or in the shops for their

¹⁰ This is most obvious with reference to caste and religious community amongst Hindus, who traditionally follow strict rules where different groups are expected to be in close contact and food might therefore be contaminated. In urban, secular settings, it is common to avoid such concerns by providing less easily contaminated food stuff, including dry foods, pre-packaged foods, and stick to vegetarian meals. This explains why lunchboxes of Bengali children will never contain rice, the main staple food in the family, as it is said to be easily contaminated by touch.

lunch boxes, and mothers need to accommodate such commodities, as they have become an important part of symbolically constructing appropriately constructing ideal middle-class families (Donner 2008b).

Modern Times

Far from being seen as a necessary evil, preschools are largely conceived as an environment that opens opportunities, nurtures and creates desirable traits and skills, and is in that way – probably even more so than further education, which can rarely be entirely divided from state interference and day-to-day politics, provides the most purified institution associated with markets, and therefore desirable future careers. On the surface preschooling, it seems, brings all the positives of neoliberal ideologies, including the vocabulary of opportunities, exposure, and choice within reach – as it is expected to provide social skills and a ‘well-rounded personality’ not produced by the home environment. However, it is also the case, as the example of the lunchbox shows, that the practices and discourses that reproduce the wider field of preschooling beyond the nursery devalue a number of cherished relationships, values and institutional arrangements. This is at the same time a continuation of older tropes, for example where mothers and their children are not disciplined enough, but also new challenges, where mothers need to ‘smarten’ up and learning includes ‘exposure’ beyond the family. If this new approach rests on the promotion of early learning institutions as ‘just like home’ to make early separation of mother and child more palatable, this implies not so much that nurseries become more homely, but that homes become more like coaching stations. The new maternal ideal is not only a teacher, but a mentor as well, who takes full responsibility and extends opportunities for learning of a single child to encompass new areas of knowledge and engagement.

The need for children from middle-class families to attend nursery schools is no longer a recent trend. Neoliberal ideas about the market, which shape parenting practices reflect the experience of mothers and their children, and evoke larger aspirational images of globalisation and India’s integration into global middle-class culture. These depend on discourses about upward mobility, which mothers and their families can enable and have internalised. The new focus on early years is therefore no longer merely reflective of competition for entry into secondary schools, though this is very important in the Kolkata context as well. Unlike the discussions of schooling in general, preschooling suggests an embrace of privatisation and services, and its provision is always discussed from a consumer point with a focus on the individual learning programmes on offer.

Furthermore, within the field of nursery education, long-term research like mine can trace changes and the effects of neoliberal ideologies. In many instances, earlier mothers would focus mostly on behavioural aspects of early years education, with the more educated mothers emphasising the pre-school's importance in establishing discipline. However, today, such a focus on behavioural patterns is intimately related to neoliberal ideologies of entrepreneurial selves – a discourse that links character traits including smartness, self-assured behaviour and 'exposure' to skills including English language competence. Clearly, nursery education feeds into the new enterprise culture embraced by the Indian middle class, which links education, youth culture and consumer identities to specific kinds of labour in the global economy (Goopta 2013).

Accordingly, mothers chose a mix of strategies to help their children, involving classic rote-learning at home and learning-is-fun educational toys instilling the same kind of knowledge. Indeed, since preschool education has become synonymous with Montessori, which some of the better educated mothers identified as 'child-centred' learning, a more labour-intensive type of parenting akin to home-schooling has emerged. Thus, today mothers educated to degree level and from upper-middle class families were mostly conversant with the educational tools and the 'method' employed at the preschool their child attended, which was constructed as the opposite of 'rote-learning' and discursively represented in terms of individual development. Here, to be a modern mother clearly implied a critique of the old regime, but was not translated into actual activities through which a son or daughter acquired skills and knowledge beyond a set of already popular skills. Enhanced through the common practice of recommending specific material, mothers could easily be convinced that in order to be make competent consumers they themselves had to 'learn' about such child-centred approaches education.

Conclusion

Earlier on I had identified processes of 'nationalising a foreign product', in the process of which early years education becomes part of wider middle class formation in an era of economic restructuring (Fernandes 2000:615; Donner 2006). Now, two decades after I first started my work with middle-class mothers and their families, it has become clear that framing these processes through a nationalist lens does limit the analysis of the class-based aspects shaping them, which can be much better observed when middleclassness is compared across the globe.

As research on places as socially diverse as China and Fiji (Naftali 2010; Brinson 2011), suggests, early years education and primary schooling are prime sites for the negotiation of neoliberal values. This is due to the spread of modern pedagogies, including the association of specific age groups with

developmental stages and the psychology of child development. However, these may be key words promoted by teachers, but as my material suggests, parents interpret them in a much wider framework. Thus, the idea of developmental stages and special needs in early childhood, so closely associated with notions of 'play', 'fun' and the acquisition of 'social skills', is framed by these middle-class parents in terms of neoliberal demands of self-regulation, self-assertion and flexible work places. IN the Indian, as in many other contexts, key values that nurseries promote are interpreted in terms of competition and the imagery of global markets in education and employment. Consequently, as household strategies were directed towards future upward mobility for the family, children are seen as a necessary investment, and their schooling becomes a paramount concern of parents. Thus, whilst there is a high degree of intra-class differentiation apparent, the symbolic dominance of specific careers and global lifestyles cuts across regions and unites this section of the Indian middle class with others elsewhere in the aim of producing migrant workers for global industries.

Thus, what Chatterjee and Riley argue in relation to family planning, namely that a neoliberal market logic has entered even the most intimate relationships, applies to early years education as well: 'While individual's happiness is linked to material and physical, rather than spiritual, well-being, the materialism promoted has a recognizable Indian, local and middle-class character' (Chatterjee and Riley: 2001).

Interestingly, however, where pre-school education has elsewhere allowed for an insertion of the state into home lives (see Naftali 2010), with the deliberate objective of reforming parenting to fit wider developmentalist agendas, the new demand for early years education in India is closely related to the privatisation of services and consumerist middle-class identities. Within families, these wider frameworks are realised step-by-step as part of multiple decisions over children's education, which on the one hand are important and far-reaching but need to be integrated into household strategies beyond the child and his or her parents. Here, older idioms, for example the opposition of the joint and the nuclear family, the controversies about servants and grandparents interfering in education, and lastly the idea that early childhood should be carefree need to be considered and reinterpreted as well, before they are inserted into such new discourses.

Clearly, a market-driven educational provision and a rhetoric of choice determine what may appear as an opportunity and the shape global Indianess will take in the minds of children and parents alike. Thus, the provision of nursery education brings a huge number of outside processes to bear on the family, through the highlighted relationship between mothers and their children.

The emphasis on global markets is reflected in the way in which preschool education is helping to reorganise the mothering practices in an environment where downward social mobility is common,

increasingly ‘the idea of early childhood represents a ‘latent potentiality’ that must be seized’ (Anagnost n.d.). Mothers and teachers are not alone in making this child/citizen happen. Increasingly their efforts are supported by expertise and services, which in the absence of state institutions are dispensed more often than not by commercial providers and a variety of often self-styled specialists. Their suggestions, predictions and solutions address the anxieties of their customers, and affect more and more middle-class children. Furthermore, the making of middle-class persons is markedly communalist (that is, identifiable Hindu) here as in any other regions. Where in the Malay example Islam and state-sponsored religiosity feature at school, regional and language-based identities are emphasised in Bengal. But apart from Hindu nationalist discourses (Benei 2008) many scholars have emphasised children as pupils have become the subjects of multiple practices resulting from liberalisation policies. Preschools, with their easily interpreted idioms of ‘personhood’ are a perfect site for this. In Kolkata, as middle-class families are anxious to create a ‘global lifestyle’ in the city itself, this desire often sits uncomfortably with local idioms of appropriate personhood. Pre-schools are part of this framework and are promoting a neoliberal ideology of entrepreneurial selves and self-regulation, which ‘reorganise(s) the family from within’ (Anagnost n.d.). Considering children as part of wider families enables us to see how preschools make neoliberalism, and its prioritisation of markets as productive of social relationships, tangible in the lives of a great number of people.

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Children and community

Bronwyn Davies

Abstract In this paper I ponder the nature of community as a concept and a practice. To flesh out my philosophical reflections on community I draw on stories from Trollet, a Reggio-Emilia-inspired pre-school in Sweden. I make an argument for community being not a stable homogeneous entity, but emergent in ongoing encounters among co-existing multiplicities.

This chapter is an extended philosophical reflection on the concept and practice of community in which I draw together concepts for re-thinking community, and then turn to stories of children in one particular community. The stories are from Trollet, a Reggio Emilia inspired pre-school in the city of Kalmar on the south-east coast of Sweden. My reflections here are part of a larger project on listening to children (Davies, 2014a).

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is specifically ‘community’ oriented, regularly bringing people in from the city to interact with the children, regularly taking the children on excursions outside the borders of the preschool, and welcoming people like me from outside Sweden. My chapter, however, is not an exposition of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, though it is informed by it. Nor do I use my observations from Trollet as an exemplar of how a community *should* be. It is not moral or even managerial arguments I am interested in here. What I have learned from my visits to Trollet over the last five years, through my encounters with the children and their teachers and pedagogues, is about the daily *doing* of community, a doing that is emergent in the on-going encounters.

What I want to do here, in this chapter, is think about doing/becoming community, and to that end, I bring together concepts not usually brought together, in particular, from Deleuze and Barad, but also from Bergson, Massey and Rinaldi. Communities are often thought of, and spoken about, as *entities*, characterized by their specific geographic or institutional location. What I hope to assemble here is an insight into community, not as an entity that can be represented, but as ongoing encounters among co-existing multiplicities. Community is emergent, I will suggest, in each successive *intra-active* moment. ‘Intra-action’ (Barad’s concept) refers to more than interaction (a meeting of two pre-existing entities); it is an encounter where each participant, and that includes non-human participants, affects, and is open to being affected by, the other (Barad, 2007; Davies, 2014b; Lenz-Taguchi, 2010). The movement of affect, as Deleuze defines it, between one being and another, will be central

to my analysis of community.

The first half of this chapter is an elaboration of the philosophical concepts used to re-think community as intra-active encounters. The second half of the chapter turns to detailed stories from Trollet of encounters between one being and another, in order to flesh out how these concepts enable us to think not only about community, but to focus on the work the participants, and children in particular, are doing to accomplish the ongoing life of a community.

The stories I have chosen show children intra-acting with adults, with other children, and with their physical environment, engaging in dialogue, experimenting, and composing themselves in multiple heterogeneous encounters. They show children with power and agency, children as ethical subjects, and children listening in such a way that enables the not-yet-known to emerge. I argue that it is through this mutual engagement of children with each other, with adults, and with their material environment that their always-emergent community is accomplished. I attend to these stories in minute detail, in their materiality, in order to make visible the *mobility* of intra-action.

What I want to show with this combination of philosophical concepts and stories of children intra-acting is the way that communities come to exist, and go on coming into existence through emergent ongoing encounters among co-existing multiplicities. A community's capacity to endure and to creatively evolve, I will suggest, depends on openness to the other, on the capacity to listen to and value difference, and on openness to the emergence of the not-yet-known.

My approach to the concept of community, then, is not in terms of a geographically determined population that can be represented in demographic terms. Nor is my primary interest in structural forces. There are many external structuring forces at play that affect any community, making it in some important sense recognizably and continuously itself. Funding models and government policy play a large part in this, as do a society's beliefs and practices concerning differences such as gender, race, class, and, in this context, the difference between adults and children. It would be a mistake, though, to imagine that a community is a *result* of those external forces. It is *affected* by those external, striating forces, and by their structured, repeated institutionalized, authorized ways of being and knowing. But as Bergson makes clear, those striating forces are themselves movements that create no more than an illusion of a stable entity. Communities are always emergent, experimental spaces, I suggest, in which a multiplicity of possibilities for thinking and doing co-exist. They are emergent assemblages with multiple entry points, and multiple, often opposing lines of force (Barad, 2007; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 257) say: "We know nothing about a body [a per-

son, a tree, a rock] until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body”. Affects, in this Deleuzian sense, are surprising. They come from “the forces that pass between the parties, which provoke a change of state and create something new in them” (Deleuze, 1997: 127).

Community as encounters in an always-evolving story

The tendency to think of communities as more or less stable and mono-cultural is not just a result of a failure to see their actual heterogeneity and movement. There is a tendency we all have to think in terms of categories, and of entities that fit into those ready-made categories. Bergson (1998: 48) is scathing about this tendency:

Our reason, incorrigibly presumptuous, imagines itself possessed ... of all the essential elements of the knowledge of truth. Even where it confesses that it does not know the object presented to it, it believes that its ignorance consists only in not knowing which one of its time-honoured categories suits the new object. In what drawer, ready to open, shall we put it? In what garment, already cut out, shall we clothe it? Is it this, or that, or the other thing? And “this,” and “that,” and “the other thing” are always something already conceived, already known.

It suits our current neoliberal governments to think of everyone in a community as having measurable and manipulable characteristics, and to this end, to think of any community and its members as entities, or things, that can be pinned down, categorized, and made predictable. This tendency to think in fixed, categorical terms Bergson describes as a line of descent, a mode of thought that can happen instantaneously and without effort. If, however, we resist this temptation, and open ourselves up to the not-yet-known, we begin to be able to see the rich and infinite variability of any community; we open ourselves up to being surprised by the encounters that take place within those communities. Such openness gives rise to what Bergson calls a line of ascent:

The universe *endures*. The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new... [I]n the universe itself two opposite movements are to be distinguished... The first [descent] only unwinds a roll ready prepared. In principle, it might be accomplished almost instantaneously, like releasing a spring. But the ascending movement, which corresponds to an inner work of ripening or creating, *endures* essentially, and imposes its rhythm on the first, which is inseparable from it. (Bergson, 1998: 11)

The lines of ascent and descent are not mutually exclusive lines of force. They actually depend on each other. Lines of ascent, or in Deleuzian terms, lines of flight, are life-giving and powerful, but Deleuze is careful to say they are not *always* so. They may sometimes be sad and even dangerous as some of the stories I tell in this chapter will show: “When a body ‘encounters’ another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts” (Deleuze, 1988: 19). Lines of ascent are capable of generating great joy but also “singular despair” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 205). Each of us, adults and children, is constantly in search of encounters that make us more powerful, more able to act effectively in the world, more capable of joy, thus energizing and giving life to the encounters that take place.

Powerful alliances within communities are a source of such joy, but those alliances may also, sometimes, be harmful both to ourselves and to others. What is good is not necessarily good for all time, or all people. The decomposition of an alliance, or a communal set of practices, is not always wrong or bad. A usual way of thinking, or a usual practice, or striated way of being, may be urgently in need of having its cohesion decomposed in order to make space for a new line of flight, a new possibility of being. Powerful alliances that increase energy and joy are life-giving, but if they become sedimented and exclusive, and can tolerate only their own fixed point of view, they may become a stifling line of force.

Sometimes communities develop a single view of what is good, which becomes dominant and is cemented into community practice, becoming a forceful line of descent. When what is understood as good and what is understood as necessary can no longer be separated, thought becomes redundant. The line of descent is instantaneous.

Badiou argues that it is of paramount importance in a community that we do not collapse our understanding of the good and the necessary into each other. Where they are not kept separate, we are each reduced, he says, to becoming mere sophists, a sophist being, according to Plato, “the one who cannot see ‘the extent to which the nature of the good and the nature of the necessary differ’” (Badiou, 2008: 150). If what we must necessarily become, and what is understood as good, become one and the same, debate about what is good is pointless. And if we legislate or otherwise dictate how everyone should think in their pursuit of the good, as neoliberal governments, globally, are fond of doing, we reduce each participant to being one whose beliefs and actions are already decided in uniform striations—that is, in repeated institutionalized, authorized ways of being and knowing. Once there is no point in thinking about what we do and why we do it, we are at risk of becoming sophists, beings without the capacity to have any effect, and thus without energy, without joy, and without need of thought. Fortunately,

for most who are likely to be reading this chapter, it is only totalitarian governments, or fanatical religious leaders, who seal absolutely the notion of the good inside what is deemed to be necessary.

Agency is vital to the life of any community. By agency I mean the power to engage with others in ways that open up the capacity for thought and being, precluding the possibility of being bound, mind and body, by an overriding or closed set of rules and definitions. While each one of us no doubt harbours a desire to have our own truths become the only truths, it is important to recognize that where truths become unquestionable, dialogue is suffocated; and it is dialogue among the children, among the teachers, and among teachers, children and parents, that enables each being, in their specificity, to make a “deep contribution” to the always-evolving story of the community (Rinaldi, 2006: 190). That deep contribution cannot be made to order through an orchestrated assent to the already-known however much governments might wish that to be so.

The communal space of a preschool can be characterised in terms of Massey’s three propositions about the nature of space:

First... [a community space is] the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny... *Second, ...* [it is] the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; ... the sphere in which distinct trajectories co-exist; as the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity... *Third, ...* [it is] always under construction... It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as the simultaneity of stories so far. (Massey, 2005: 9)

A community I suggest, with Massey, is always relational, plural, and emergent. It is a place where multiple distinct pathways coexist, and co-implicate each other. Continuous becoming is “the nature of our being” (Massey, 2005: 21). Each of us is a multiplicity in connection with other multiplicities, even where those multiplicities contain, as they inevitably do, opposing lines of force.

The self as emergent multiplicities

Multiplicities, in Deleuze and Guattari’s words, do not refer to discrete entities existing side by side, or even bouncing off each other, but beings that “continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other ... [so that] becoming and multiplicity are the same thing” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). We are each, like communities, produced through intra-actions, we are multiplicities, always in process of becoming: “the self is a threshold, a door, a becoming between two. Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline... but there is a string of borderlines, a continuous line of borderlines (*fi-ber*) following which the multiplicity changes. And at each threshold or door, a new pact?” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). The movement across a threshold, between one and another, potentially con-

tributes to the creative evolutionary force of each one, and of the community as a whole.

Thresholds are not only present in our encounters with human others (Davies and Gannon, 2009, Somerville et al, 2011). We are, in Wilson's words, ontologically co-implicated not only with humans, but with animals as well as with "plants, rocks, and emotions" (Wilson, 2004: 69). The evolution of life, she observes, is "radically heterogeneous; certainly it is biological, but it is also psychological, cultural, geological, oceanic, and meteorological" (Wilson, 2004: 69). Our being emerges in relation to human and non-human and earth others—to a ray of light on water, for example, a tree glowing green in the late afternoon light, a breeze, the sound of laughter, a cold block of clay, a juicy orange, the smell of lunch cooking, a smile, the feeling of the air as you fly through it, a friend's hand in yours. Each joyful encounter with another is what Deleuze calls a *haecceity*, an immersion in the present moment that "moves the soul" (Deleuze, 1990: 140). It is an intensity, a becoming that takes you outside the habitual practices of the already-known; it is intra-active, and corresponds to the power to affect and be affected (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987).

Being open, and being vulnerable to being affected by the other, is how we accomplish our humanity; it is how the communities, of which we are part, create and re-create themselves. We are not separate from the encounters that make up the community but, rather, emergent *with* them.

The co-implication of matter, meaning and ethics

What I want to turn to now, in this last section before I come to the children's stories, is the inseparability and mutual dependence of meaning, matter and ethics. Barad (2007) argues, from the point of view of a physicist, that the *study of matter* cannot actually take place in isolation either from the conceptual apparatus we bring to bear on it, or from the ethical implications of what we do to and with the matter of ourselves, each other, or the places we live in. Each moment matters, each moment is material and has ethical implications. Individuals and striations do not exist independently of people who think and speak and act with/in them, but in the emergent and multiple encounters through which individuals and communities *engage in mattering*.

Just so, ethics cannot just be a matter of separate individuals following a set of rules (where the necessary and the good are collapsed into one another). Ethical practice, as both Barad and Deleuze define it, requires thought—and it is intra-active. As Deleuze points out, "The best society, then, will be one that exempts the power of thinking from the obligation to obey, and takes care, in its own interest, not to subject thought to the rule of the state, which only applies to actions. As long as thought is free, hence vital, nothing is compromised" (1988: 4). Similarly, ethics, as Barad defines it, is a matter of questioning what is being made to matter and how that mattering affects what it is possible to do and to think.

Ethics is emergent in the intra-active encounters in which knowing, being and doing (epistemology, ontology and ethics) are inextricably entangled (Barad, 2007).

The ways in which we affect each other, and are affected, cannot be separated from thought any more than it can be separated from bodies. Thought and action are mutually entangled, just as individual beings, who know and who act, are mutually entangled. This mutual entanglement does not absolve one from ethical responsibility. Quite the reverse; paying attention to the ways in which thought and action affect others makes each individual all the more responsible for the impact of their words and actions.

So, on the one hand, individual beings are always being subjected to pre-existing, institutionalized striations with their normalized ways of speaking the world into existence. On the other, they become subjects through the lines of force that escape those striations, in moments of *haecceity*. These contrary forces, in many versions of community-making throughout history, have been collapsed into one another, the necessary and the good being defined as the same thing, such that the rules and striations, the structuring forces, become what every good person must desire. Communities are thus rendered finite, limiting, and even reducing, the potential and diversity of life within them. When contemplating the strength of this tendency to limit and constrain multiplicity, Badiou even doubts that “community” can be made to stand for such complex life forces: against this “ontological infinity of situations”...”Community seems to me unable to stand as the name for this processing of the infinite” (2008: 172).

Yet communities cannot exist without some striations, and will always tend to counter lines of flight with lines of descent that re-striate action and thought. This is inevitably part of the formation of powerful alliances (Bergson, 1998; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). At the same time, a community’s power to *endure* comes from multiplicity, from encounters, from an always-emergent openness to the not-yet-known.

To escape the stifling tendency of the will-to-order and to predictability, Reggio-Emilia philosophy makes the valuing of difference a primary value, along with being open to the emergence of the not-yet-thought in oneself and another (Ceppi and Zini, 1998). The capacity and willingness to be open to the other, in all his or her difference, is crucial, not only to the capacity of a community to endure, but to the constitution of that community as an ethical place. “When you consider others as part of your identity, then their different, sometimes divergent, theories and opinions are seen as a resource. The awareness of the value of these differences and of having dialogue among them increases” (Rinaldi, 2006: 206).

Ethical practice in this sense is not so much tied up with regulation and repetition (though it is partly that), but with the practice of listening for “that which cannot be said but which tries to make itself heard” (Readings, 1996: 165).

Opening up the not-yet-known through dialogue, and through the careful listening that is involved in keeping meaning open, relies, in Reggio-Emilia-inspired preschools, on recognition of the one hundred languages that we share with children. The concept of a hundred languages is not only a way of crediting children and adults with multiple communicative potentials: “it is a declaration of the equal dignity and importance of *all* languages, not only writing, reading and counting, ... for the construction of knowledge” (Rinaldi, 2006: 175).

Rinaldi argues that children are extraordinary listeners—and that we, as adults, can learn from them how to engage in reciprocal listening. We can learn from children to “‘listen’ to life in all its facets, listen to others with generosity, quickly perceive how the act of listening is an essential act of communication” (Rinaldi, 2006: 116). Children open themselves up in multiple ways to new possibilities, and in doing so, make the very basis of an ethical community possible.

Participation in an ethical community serves to enhance the specificity of each child, and at the same time, to enhance each specific child’s capacity to actively participate in the making of community in all its emergent multiplicity. Communities, then, are emergent mattering, engaged, in Barad’s terms, in bringing forth new worlds, engaged in reconfiguring the world. A community is not so much a place, or a finite group of people, but a way of mattering, a way of engaging with the world, and of re-configuring that world as a place where self and other matter, and make a difference, to each other and with each other.

So now to the stories from Trollet, to see how these ideas might play out in the moment-by-moment intra-actions of life in one preschool community.

Acts of listening/becoming-community

The teachers and pedagogues I encountered at Trollet, over the five years of my visits there, were scientists in the sense that Massey defines that term—where science is not representation of what is imagined to be already there, but experimentation. When they invited me to participate in their community, they invited me to become part of their ongoing experimentation, where science is

... an element in a continuous production; a part of it all, and itself constantly becoming. This is a position which rejects a strict separation between world and text and which understands scien-

tific activity as being just that – an activity, a practice, an embedded engagement *in* the world of which it is part. Not representation but experimentation. (Massey, 2005: 28)

To be welcomed into Reggio-Emilia-inspired communities is to be welcomed as a potential catalyst for new thought—not as someone who brings superior (or inferior) knowledge from outside, but as someone who will enter into that ongoing emergent project of discovery.

Despite my lack of Swedish I immediately felt at home at Trollet. I was deeply intrigued by what new thoughts and ways of being I might find myself part of. Our encounters were, in Massey's sense, experimental, where each participant recognised and respected the other "in a situation of mutual implication", an "imaginative space of engagement", where each was emergent *in relation* to the other (Massey, 2005: 69). In Rinaldi's terms, we engaged in dialogue, entering "a process of transformation where you lose absolutely the possibility of controlling the final result" (Rinaldi, 2006: 184). That willingness to make oneself vulnerable to the thought that is yet to emerge, opens us up to dialogue with children; "the child's search for meaning in life pushes you, if you dialogue with him, into the universe..." (Rinaldi, 2006: 185).

The Trollet site has a beautiful garden, with many old trees, huge round rocks—many places to hide, and places to play. The building has at its centre, a large, light piazza which functions like the public square in an Italian town. In the piazza people meet and talk, and plan, and eat, and play together, and there are long-term collaborative art projects going on. One side of the piazza has glass walls revealing a beautiful courtyard with a fountain at its centre. Each of the classrooms has glass walls opening onto the piazza. The large windows enable a flow of light and visibility between spaces. The piazza is not only a social space but an aesthetic space, filled with many beautiful things--a flower submerged in a glass vase, and a candle floating in a bowl of water, a bowl of fruit, a print on the wall by Monet. This is a space in which the children take special care of each other and of what is around them.

Trollet had, at the time of my early visits, an outstanding cook who provided breakfast, lunch and morning and afternoon tea. When lunch was served the children competently served themselves from each hot dish and at the table poured out their own glasses of water. They sat around the dining table with their teachers, chatting quietly to each other across the table, and passing bowls of salad to each other, using knives and forks competently—constituting the group as a community of people who recognise each other, and who could draw me, an aging, English-speaking professor, into their community.

I begin with a story from my first day at Trollet:

As the five-year-old children sit in their home classroom listening to the teacher, I notice the

physical connectedness of skin on skin, hand on hair, an extension of each into the collective. They know who they are, each in their specificity within specific one-on-one relations, but they also work together as a whole. As they sit around in a semi-circle on the tiered benches quietly attending to what the teacher is saying, they also attend to their relations with each other. A girl sits down on the lower tier, her bottom on the feet of a boy sitting on the higher tier. She wriggles a little, with a fleeting look of irritation on her face. The benches are not deep enough to accommodate both feet and bottoms. The boy shifts his legs to make room for the girl, so that his knees embrace her. She settles down comfortably, and he gently runs his fingers through her hair as they listen to the teacher. Both looked completely present in the moment, with each other, within the group. Two other boys sit close together, the foot of one stroking the foot of the other, two feet intertwined, gently, affectionately, without disrupting the flow of the lesson. As well, the children include me in the lesson by using words in English, and by seeking out eye contact with me.

At the end of this first group session, instead of going off to his allocated group activity, one boy decides to show me his favourite picture book. We sit together in animated discussion over his favourite picture, discussing its intricacies, he in Swedish and me in English. It is an exciting picture, with a bank in the middle and a tunnel under the bank through which robbers are crawling. One robber has already successfully robbed the bank and is running away. There are cowboys and indians on horses fighting, and a cowboy buying an ice cream at an ice cream parlour. There are dogs barking and exotic mountains in the distance. There is much here for us to discuss. He tells a teacher, who briefly comes into the room to check that we are OK, that he finds it really exciting to talk to me—and indeed he is visibly excited, sometimes clutching his genitals in an ecstasy of delight—a haecceity found in the just-thisness of the emergent moment in which we are completely absorbed in the picture, in the book, and in our communication with each other. The teacher later tells me that she had been surprised at his visible and voluble animation, since he is a boy who rarely speaks.

After we finish with the book, he takes me by the hand and shows me around the whole preschool explaining who is in each of the areas that we can see through the windows, and he shows me what each space is for within the piazza. Although he speaks in Swedish, he also uses gestures and facial expressions that make his meanings clear to me.

The boy who does not usually speak initiates an encounter, here, in which he and I, together with a book, move outside the orderly striations of the teacher's plans for the day. In his openness to my difference he is able to create a space in which he can speak with animation and with joy. Together we sit down to explore the intricacies of a picture he loves. He draws my attention to particular details, look-

ing at my face to see if I am attending, then telling me more, laughing as he does so. He draws me into his world and the world of the book. Because I can't speak Swedish, I can't obey any impulse I might have to re-territorialize the space with teacherly striations in which I direct and he follows. Like the boy I also discover new possibilities. I find myself listening to the sound of his voice, reading his body language and his facial expressions, opening myself up to his idea, his pleasure. His happiness spills over and becomes my happiness too, so that I experience that crossing over where "becoming and multiplicity are the same thing" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). Our difference from each other, in particular our language difference, far from being a problem, was an asset in opening us up to what we could each become in relation to the other.

In drawing attention to these micro-moments of being, I am working against the grain of taken-for-granted ways of seeing (or not seeing) what it is that children can do. Through listening to children I want to make visible, within the everyday, the extraordinary skills children have, and the emergent, the creative, the intra-active encounters they engage in as they do the ongoing work of bringing themselves and their community into being.

In this first encounter we have a space made up of two people and a book, not tracing habitual striations laid down elsewhere, but actively mapping a new possibility, each open to the other, to the affective flow between them. We are able to take this line of flight together, in part because of our openness to the unexpected, and in part because of the orderly plane of existence established by everyone else that makes the unexpected possible, permissible. The teacher checks that we are ok, and accepts that we have gone off into another order, other than the one she was establishing. She does not need to pull the boy back into her plan for the day; she is open to the experimental encounter in which the boy finds his words spilling out in a joyful torrent. Not only does the boy share his favourite picture, but he also discovers in himself a competent and voluble knowledge of how the different spaces of the preschool articulate with each other, and how he might share that knowledge with a stranger. In entering into this joyful encounter, in which, together, we form a more powerful whole than each of us had previously been, I discover the joy of letting go of my adult teacherly self who presumes to already know and to know better, instead, learning how to listen with all my senses, and so experience a moment of *haecceity*. We were, in Rinaldi's sense, open to the universe where "there are no limits" (Rinaldi, 2006: 185).

The children's openness to experimental encounters, to becoming in new ways in relation to difference, was also evident in other ways that they responded to me, a stranger in their midst. While some were shy in the face of my lack of Swedish, others invented ways to engage with me, mobilizing multiple languages.

A five-year-old boy who sat next to me at lunch was chatting away to me very intently, looking into my eyes as he spoke. Puzzled that Birgitta, the pedagogue, who shared our lunch table, did not offer a translation for something so apparently important, I asked her to translate for us. She came round to our side of the lunch table and squatted down beside him, asking him to tell her what he was saying. When he hesitated, she asked him to whisper it into her ear. But still she couldn't understand him, and asked him to tell her in Swedish. He blushed and said he couldn't tell her, as he didn't know what he was saying since he did not yet understand English. Realizing, then, that I did not have to understand the meaning of the words, but to engage in conversation with him, to connect with him, I happily listened to him with all my senses. He stroked my bare arm as we talked and when I turned to talk to someone else, he planted a small sweet kiss on my arm.

When I visited some of the children two years later, at their big school, this boy rushed up to meet me, and the affective surge of joy between us was there still. He clearly had not forgotten me, though he did not remember that he had talked to me in "English". "I must have been very clever when I was young" he said, when I reminded him of that earlier encounter.

In that earlier meeting the boy initiated an encounter in which our two bodies became an interconnected communicative part of the larger group at the lunch table. In this moment there were again two people, this time surrounded by others who joined together as a lunch-time community, and engaged in conversation across language boundaries, depending for the most part on Birgitta's attentive and detailed translations. One boy extended his communicative capacity and found a way to talk to me without the aid of translation. In doing so he made my heart melt and he bound us together in a mutual entanglement of becoming with each other, and with those others who made up the community around the table—not forgetting the cook who had provided a meal so delicious that the children went back for second and third helpings. His openness to my difference extended my sensory awareness, my openness to difference and to unexpected connections and lines of flight.

The children thus drew me into their community, and connected me to it. No-one bade these children, as far as I know, to make me part of their world. I was potentially someone to be ignored with my lack of Swedish. But they worked to bring me into their community, and into the universe of possibilities that might be created in each new moment. They demonstrated their capacity to "listen" to life in all its facets [and to] listen to others with generosity" (Rinaldi, 2006: 116). They taught me in doing so how I too could extend my capacity for listening and for becoming.

During my visits to Trollet, when I was not talking to the children or the teachers, I stood or sat quietly

observing, and writing whatever I saw in my notebook. The children were curious about what I was writing, and often asked me what I was doing. Sometimes the answer that I was writing was enough, though occasionally the questions persisted until they grasped I was a kind of scientist, who was interested in what happens in preschools. Sometimes the children came close and watched me writing and asked could they write too, as happened one afternoon in the playground.

I sit alone in the warm afternoon sun and a girl approaches me. She asks to write in my book so I give her my pencil and she does some careful small squiggles of writing. We have a lively, funny time passing the pencil back and forth. Her small writing grows larger and I introduce the possibility of drawing a picture together. As we pass the pencil back and forth I tell her some English words connected to what we are drawing and she grows very confident with repeating them. Shoes, pink shoes, heart, hair, nose, lips, etc. Her drawing grows more and more confident as we go. I trace her hand and draw in the fingernails, which she 'paints'. I show her how to use the rubber on the end of the pencil to tidy the "nail-polish" up a bit. We put a poking out tongue on the mouth of the face we draw and she has fun poking out her own tongue then saying the name of it. Then her big sister comes to pick her up. She is happy to see her and makes no fuss about going.

Next day she comes to talk to me again. I talk to her in English and she shows by her facial expression that she doesn't understand. I comment that she has her pink shoes on. She beams and points to her pink t-shirt and to the rabbit on it. I comment that her t-shirt is pink and has a rabbit on it and she nods happily. Is this enough? No. She wants me to watch her on the ropes. She wants me to see how strong she is. I praise her for her strength and she looks very happy. She has again successfully initiated a positive flow of affect between us. She picks up a stick and 'draws' on my page. She brings 2 buckets and a spade and persuades me to fill one of the buckets with sand. Briefly this turns into planting sticks and leaves in plant pots. Soon after she pulls the sticks and leaves out of the sand. She persuades me to take turns with the spade, putting more sand into the buckets. She tells me she is getting some water. Vatten. She pours the water into the 2 buckets and they overflow. She plays with the overflowing water, satisfied, and when it all soaks away into the sand she goes off to get more water. She is content that I am standing here writing. She brings another bucket of water and pours it in. It overflows and she builds a dam, then walks in the dam, stamping in the water. She joyfully kicks the sand then smooths out the wet sand. I have a moment of anxiety about the beautiful pink shoes becoming wet and dirty but manage to let it pass. How easy it would have been for me to spoil this moment of happiness! My lack of Swedish again puts a useful trip on my tongue. This sequence is repeated, faster, until the

water disappears. Now the buckets are full of soup to eat. The prac teacher joins us. She has one of those instant moments of anxious protest when the water flows everywhere and the buckets of sand become soup, 'no!' she says, as if it is all becoming too chaotic, but she lets it go and 'tastes' the soup. The girl is delighted that the teacher goes along with the fact that the buckets now contain soup. Then the buckets are upturned to make castles. The castles are admired and then demolished by the girl jumping joyfully on them. Each transformation, pot plant to dam to smooth surface to soup to castle is joyful. The action (making the castle) is focused and concentrated, but the transformation from one thing to another is what is thrilling.

I am fascinated by the way I am affectively drawn into these encounters, and by the way my teacherly self has an impulse to intrude with unnecessary striations. I learn to see just how unnecessary my impulse to order is, precisely because of my lack of Swedish. Instead of saying "be careful", and dampening the experimental play down, I enter into the pleasure of it. The child's quiet concentration, her calm, spills over into my body, and I relax and enjoy the light of the afternoon sun on the leaves, the warmth of it on my back, the fresh chill on the air and the child quietly playing in the sand. I learn to enjoy the exciting transformations instead of worrying. Excitement spills from one to the other. And I see too how excitement can, in a split second, turn to anxiety and a wish for the experimentation to stop. I saw that vividly this same morning between two children on the swings. They are close friends and love to swing together on the same swing, but she likes to swing high and he does not. When the swing went too high there were tears on both sides. Excitement, and then a fear of danger. A step too far and the excitement lurches into fear and a reversion to the safety of old patterns and striations. The line of descent re-asserts itself.

I am fascinated as I watch the children play by the way affect is a quality of a collective rather than an individual. As I observe the children at play I see that courage too is an affect that spills from one to another.

Three children are trying to scale a huge granite rock. One boy succeeds and he sits on the top and beams encouragement at the ones still trying to reach the top. His body experiences the surge of the others' determination, and so does mine as I watch. The girl is so tiny, but she wills her muscles to be strong and the boys behind her and before her share in her courage and look happy. But suddenly she falls. The boys' bodies immediately switch to alarm, shouting to the teacher who comes running. Courage swings swiftly to alarm. Is she OK? Does she want to leave the big rock? But no, her affect swings back to courage. The rock is so much bigger than she is, but she tries again, and courage flows between the three. In a way it doesn't matter if she succeeds. It is the courageous leap, the momentary clinging on, and then the slide down the rock

face, followed by circling round for another turn, first standing and watching the boy have his turn. But then a bigger boy runs up and goes straight up the rock face and takes up almost all the space on the top. The small boy leaps and makes it too. There are now three boys on the top and they are not making any room for her. The courage that flowed between the original three is gone, and the girl turns quietly and leaves.

For the time the two small boys and the even-smaller girl worked together to scale the rock, they combined to form a powerful whole. Their courage and determination to accomplish what seemed impossible in their encounter with the rock passed affectively between them, and it spread to me as I watched. The courage of the one who successfully climbed the rock became the courage of the other two. The not-yet-known—how to climb the rock—was something each was determined to discover despite the temporary set-back when the girl fell. When the larger boy joined in, showing how it is done, the second boy suddenly acquired the bodily knowledge he had been striving for, and scaled the rock. But there was no space left on the top of the rock, and no affective courage flowing to the small girl. The original threesome was decomposed. The girl lost the bodily cohesion that she had had when part of the alliance of the group of three. The rock became a boys' rock, and the possibility of scaling it belonged, for the moment, to those three boys.

As alliances shift, so power transfers from one group to another. If the boys' allied power in taking over the space were to become cemented as both good and necessary (only boys should climb rocks), then the community would have a problem to solve—decompositions to engage in.

I am not separate from any of these observations. Even when I stand on the borders and observe, the affective flow of what I see engages me materially, conceptually and ethically. I am not a pre-existing entity who sees something that exists independent of my gaze, but inextricably part of it all, constantly becoming, just as the children are intra-actively becoming within the emergent community we are collectively producing. My personal history with gender means I am alert to the possibility of gendered lines becoming fixed in oppressive striations. The intra-action on the rock alerts me to that possibility but it does not become evident as a repeated pattern.

(In)conclusion

A community, I have argued here, is not so much a place, or a finite group of people, but a way of mattering, a way of engaging with the world, of re-configuring that world as a place where self and other matter, where each makes a difference to each other and with each other. The children at Trollet are creative in their search for ways to incorporate a stranger into their midst; the stories I have told show how their acts of inclusion create affective flows that not only work to include the stranger but to open

up new possibilities for themselves. A small boy discovers an unaccustomed rush of joyful words in sharing his favourite picture with someone who cannot speak his language; another finds a way to open up a flow of communication by inventing the language of the stranger, creating a joyful affective flow between them that endured long beyond the moment of the encounter; a girl shares in the scientific experimentation of the stranger by exchanging writing and drawing and words, as well as the transformative potential of sand.

Through attending to the fine detail of my encounters with children I have explored the flow of affect between one and another, a flow that carries us over a threshold from already existing knowledge to something new, something that is, I have suggested, in itself, the matter and mattering of community. I have thus argued that a community is not made up of separate individualized entities or specific rules and striated structures, but is emergent in the daily *doing* of community. That doing is accomplished through encounters that open up affective flows between one material being and another; children together, as I showed in the story of children scaling the rock, generate a space that is relational, plural, and emergent.

Each such encounter with a child brings us to a threshold, to a new pact, to an emergent sense of what it is to be a member of this particular community in this particular moment. To enter into joyful compositions with the children we encounter, is to “combine to form a more powerful whole” (Deleuze, 1988: 19), a whole that enables us to compose ourselves anew, and for the children we encounter to compose themselves anew, such that each experiences an increase in joy, as well as, crucially, an increase in the power to think and to act. Such encounters open each particular being to the intensity of their own experience in relation to others and in doing so, contribute to the ongoing emergent life of their community.

Encounters with others, where each is open to the difference of the other and to being affected by the other, are integral to the life of any community if it is to endure. To emphasize openness to the other and to the not-yet-known is not to deny the specificity of each person, and the longing each one of us has to be recognized in that specificity. Rather, I have argued that the very specificity, the *haecceity* or just-thisness of each individual, is *mobile* and *intra-active*. Our capacity to enter into composition with others both enhances our specificity and expands our capacity for thought and for action. It is that openness to entering into composition with heterogeneous others in an ongoing way that enables a community both to emerge, in all its co-existing multiplicity, and to creatively evolve. Its emergence as an ethical place depends not just on striations laid down by powerful forces, but on openness to difference in the other and in oneself, and openness to the not-yet-known, with all the riskiness that that might entail.

Acknowledgement

This chapter was drawn in part from pages 5-20 of Davies, B. (2014) *Listening to Children. Being and Becoming*, Abingdon: Routledge.

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Creatively enhancing community transformation through work with children and families¹¹

Fernanda Coelho Liberali and Alzira Shimoura

Abstract This chapter discusses community transformation through a teacher education project, *Learn through Playing*, which works with young children and their families in some deprived neighbourhoods of São Paulo, Brazil. It examines how young children, parents, teachers, principals, coordinators, even teacher educators and researchers develop collective intentionality based on a shared object which is created and recreated throughout different interlinked activities that compose the project; i.e., its Creative Chain. This creation of a shared intentionality demanded that each activity created the meaning of a reading community as an object of the activity (Vygotsky 1930). In each activity, subjects presented their points of views, support, explanations, descriptions, definitions, performances as part of a responsible community that developed means of going beyond the previous limitations of their own ideas. Therefore, the transformation occurred not only in terms of individuals changing their ways of seeing and participating in the world through reading but also by means of the transformation of the collectivity as a reading community. The importance of thinking about the transformation of collectivities, and not simply about changing or refocusing immediate activities in which individual subjects are involved, was central for the development of human potential through a culture of de-silencing and understanding which generates potential for community transformation (Freire 1968).

Keywords:

Community transformation, Children, families, Creative chain

Introduction

In the deprived contexts of many Brazilian public schools, young children, parents, teachers, principals, coordinators, even teacher educators and researchers feel deprived of the possibility of creating conditions for a better future. Thus, a culture of alienation and domestication leans towards dehumanization and reduction of human potential (Freire 1968) into reproductions of uncritical

¹¹ We would like to thank Airton Pretini Junior, Daniela Aparecida Vendramini Zanella and Thomas Regelski for their contributions to this chapter.

conscience and the proliferation of the practice of repeating words, without understanding their meaning.

In contrast, Freire (1968) suggests a culture of de-silencing and understanding which generates potential for transformation. In this culture of dialogue, people take charge of seeking the “emersion of conscience, which results in critical insertion in reality” (Freire 1968, p. 80). In this problematizing approach to life, the practice of freedom and dialogue needs to emerge. In a dialogical basis, an internally persuasive discourse, as proposed by Bakhtin (1934-35/ 1998), argues that multiple voices can be interwoven in a context in which questioning becomes essential because it arises from disturbances and/or needs and is associated with the subjects’ actions and reflections. It may involve enhancing community transformation because it presupposes that, through multivoicedness, subjects will constantly review their own ideas, consider those of others and create possibilities for creative production of the world.

The point of departure for this chapter is the understanding that working with small children in their lived environments should contribute not only for the child but also for the families as participants in compound and historical social practices. The study centers on small children in poor communities of the city of São Paulo, Brazil.

São Paulo is a leading financial, industrial and commercial centre with important cultural, economic and political influence, both nationally and internationally. However, its socio-economic problems are huge: high crime rates, rampant drug use, poor public health services, very low achievement in education, lack of green areas, homeless squatting, precarious conditions of the sewage network and in the disposal of solid wastes, soil contamination, air and water pollution, and sound, visual, and electromagnetic pollution¹².

In this context, communities are threatened and deprived of basic needs and demands. Many young children grow up on the streets, apart from all the riches that the city offers to an elite few. In this unfair context, families whose parents had a very limited education struggle to educate their children. Local governments (municipal and state) are responsible for establishing free educational programs

¹² Sources: <http://www.cbd.int/authorities/casestudy/saopaulo.shtml#threats> ;
<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/saopaulo/864360-dez-problemas-atormentam-toda-a-cidade-de-sao-paulo.shtml> ;
<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/saopaulo/1112587-datafolha-revela-os-11-principais-problemas-da-cidade-para-eleitores.shtml> (11/11/2013)

through the guidelines and funding supplied by the federal government. In São Paulo, about 770 schools serve kindergarten children, aged 0-5 years, the focus of this chapter.

This chapter discusses *how community transformation is enhanced through the collaborative work of researchers, educators, children and families*. The focus relies on the *Learn through Playing* Project, part of the *Acting as Citizens Program* -- PAC¹³, a program for school communities' development in São Paulo, Brazil. The importance of thinking about the transformation of collectivities, and not simply about changing or refocusing immediate activities in which individual subjects are involved, is essential for the project since the goal is the intentional creation of communities for reading with adults and with children. In this sense, the project focused on how the participants make cultural practices explicit and include adults and children in creating environments for community enhancement.

In this chapter, children are seen as constituting themselves through the relationship they establish with others and with the environment, and that their psychological development and the development of their identities are directly related to the cultural-historical-social context in which they are inserted. While being influenced by the context they are in, they also contribute to transform this context. Therefore, a collaborative environment can be seen as a tool to involve and enhance families and community's transformation.

Children's development is then understood from the perspective of their participation in everyday activities and in situated interplays with others. Vygotsky (1934c) adds that one can only understand the human mind historically because it is created and produced through the participation in and through the internalization and externalization of historical-social forms of activity. In this manner, the subject's individual constitution is inseparable from his social, cultural history.

This can be better understood in Vygotsky's explanation of the importance of cooperation in young children's development:

(...) a completely unique form of social relations develops between the child and the adults around him. Specifically owing to the immaturity of biological functions, all of what will later be in the sphere of individual adaptation of the child and will be done by him independently now can be done in no other way than through others, in no other

¹³PAC – Programa Ação Cidadã

way than in a situation of cooperation. Thus, the first contact of the child with reality (even in carrying out the most elementary biological functions) is wholly and completely socially mediated. (Vygotsky, 1934c, p 215)

As stated, children's relationship and cooperation with adults may create multiple possibilities of becoming for this children who, in turn, may set grounds for adults to reorganize their ways of being and acting in the world through them. They can relate to each other, constituting and transforming themselves mutually.

In order to better understand this interdependent perspective, one needs to go beyond the individual perspective to take into account the social aspect of the experience, in other words, what Vygotsky defined as *perezhivanie*:

The essential factors which explain the influence of environment on the psychological development of children, and on the development of their conscious personalities, are made up of their emotional experiences: [*perezhivanie*] (VYGOTSKY, 1934b, p. 338).

Rene van der Veer and Jaan Valsiner, editors of the English translation of the text (VYGOTSKY, 1934b: 354), give this explanation for the word *perezhivanie*:

“The Russian term *perezhivanie* serves to express the idea that one and the same objective situation may be interpreted, perceived, experienced or lived through by different children in different ways. Neither ‘emotional experience’ (which is used here and which only covers the affective aspect of the meaning of *perezhivanie*), nor ‘interpretation’ (which is too exclusively rational) are fully adequate translations of the noun. Its meaning is closely linked to that of the German verb ‘erleben’ (cf. ‘Erlebnis’, ‘erlebte Wirklichkeit’).”

In this chapter, the discussion lies on the *perezhivanie* experienced by participants. In other words, it is based on the interpretation of how the “changing child life in a changing world”, as stated by Højholt (in this section), changes this world. In this sense, not only the children and their transformation will be important but the transformation of all those connected to them. In this sense, the family, for example, becomes an essential aspect of children's and society's development. The

experiences the children have with the world and the way these influences interfere back in the lives of their families is a way to trigger community transformation.

This chapter focus on a Project developed to trigger community transformation through working with children and their parents at nurseries and pre-schools in very deprived neighbourhoods of São Paulo Municipal Schools.

The Learn through Playing Project

Since their beginning, schools for children under five in Brazil have emphasized “minding” so that parents were free for their own activities (Kishimoto 2005, Barbosa 2006, Faria Filho and Veiga 2000, and Guerra 2010). Thus, there wasn’t much demand for professional qualification for the workers in these educational institutions. However, in the sixties, due to a series of social movements, people started questioning this. In response to that, educational theorists began to discuss early childhood education as a child’s right and a State duty, and cities transferred the responsibility for young children from health departments to educational ones. This demanded that professionals in charge of taking care of young children had university degrees in education and educational theorists began to discuss early childhood education as a child’s right and a State duty. This created a demand for the professionalization and the development of educators to work with young children.

Since 2007, the *Learn through Playing Project*, focus of this chapter, has been developed in the public nurseries and pre-schools of the deprived neighbourhoods of São Paulo and aims to develop possibilities for researchers, principals, coordinators, teachers, young children and parents to use *play* (Vygotsky 1930/1978) as the locus for development. This project is part of the *Acting as Citizens Program* (PAC), an Extramural Program developed by PhDs, Doctoral students, Master students, undergraduates, participants, and fellow researchers from the Pontific Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Its major topic is creating and planning activities that will “educate” the whole community. The project (Liberali and Shimoura 2011) includes a:

- *Principals’ and Coordinators’ Segment* for transforming principals and coordinators into teacher educators who support teachers’ projects with students and the community.
- *Children’s Story Telling Segment* for developing *teacher support teams* (Daniels and Parrilla, 2004) to develop ways of playing that use storytelling as a means of community development.

From 2010 to 2012, the project focused on the development of reading as a general aim of the Municipal Secretariat of Education. The objective was to promote reading communities through activities for sharing reading. Thus, a critical and collaborative position of the researchers as well as of the other participants as apprentices throughout the project was necessary (Magalhães and Fidalgo 2010).

In 2010, the *Learn through Playing* Project focused on the Municipal Secretariat of Education's general demand for the development of reading as a goal of the whole community, including coordinators, principals, teachers, students, and parents. The year's objective of the Project was to develop a reading community through activities for sharing reading, such as: soiree, storytelling sessions, comments on movies, book sessions, and book clubs, among others. This objective derived from the research group's understanding that in poor areas where the young children in this project live, people in general are deprived of the possibility of fulfilling their potential as culturally engaged subjects who can experience reading as a means of community participation. In these places, it is commonly acknowledged that reading is a means to get a job, to take the bus, to vote but not as a means of becoming a full member of society, as a way of "being for oneself", as Freire puts it (1968).

Essentially, there were two main contrasting positions at the beginning of 2010: the idea of connecting reading to a *cognitive* process and the idea of reading as participating in the community's *social* reading activities. This contradiction was chosen as a way of contributing to the development of a collective object that should permeate each of the initial activities that composed the network of the project. Accordingly, the researchers proposed a chain of activities in which the contradiction could be understood, analyzed, evaluated, reconstructed, practiced, reformulated, so that a collective meaning would develop about what reading was. In this sense, the contradiction, transgression, recreation and transformation of these initial views came out as an imagined object where the multiplicity of ideas was its main tools and opportunities for the clash of senses as locus. In these situations, subjects were invited to present their points of view on the importance of reading and sharing reading by the posing of controversial questions, supporting their statements, and performing in situations.

The first movement in the chain: preparatory meetings

At the first planning and workshop of the 2010 semester, participants wrote the agenda (i.e., citizen attitude to be focused on, books to be read, and materials to photocopy) they used to organize their plan for the year. For each item, they discussed what they could choose and how they would deal with it in the first meeting with school participants. In the excerpt attached (appendix 1), researchers discussed how they were going to deal with the theme of the year for the project. In 2010, they decided to follow the Municipal Secretariat of Education's focus on developing reading.

Anticipating a possible difference in the interpretation of the Secretariat and that of the research group, the general coordinator, F, became the one to question the choice of theme and the way to conduct it. The researchers also pointed out the problems not having had a contact in everyday life with the topics participants would deal with. To prepare for that, the researchers listed ways of thinking about reading in contexts of activities that could become constitutive of the spheres of circulation (Bakhtin 1953) of the whole community. This triggered the first contradiction among researchers and sparked the expansion of the possibilities of understanding among researchers (see excerpt in appendix 1).

Two different positions were discussed for the 2010 theme. One assumed that the Secretariat of Education had a demand – working with reading skills -- which the researchers were supposed to fulfill. This objective had to be appropriated by the researchers once the project was in tune with the needs posed by the Secretariat to develop cognitive skills. The other position was based on a reorganization of the demand for the development of reading skills as necessary, but it focused on its reconceptualization, supported by the revaluation of the role of education as decided by the research group. In this sense, any project, developed within PAC, had to aim at developing the community and at emphasizing recognizable situations in which the community could effectively trigger transformation in their ways of acting and being, in overcoming oppressive circumstances.

The researchers deciding on their main theme for the project focused not on deciding who was right or wrong or stating which idea was the best, but on how to be coherent to the aims of the project and how to combine different positions in order to better achieve the intentional objective of the group: the transformation of the whole community and not only of individuals or their cognitive potentials. This was going to be the collective object of the group, the collective intention leading the project throughout the year. Therefore, the discussion would delimit all the procedures for the workshops and the artifacts used to initiate the chain.

Participants thus needed to have what was considered the *ideal form* of the product: what all participants were aware of and in search of. It was through argumentative discussion such as this that participants presented, opposed, supported and combined their positions in order to create shared objects (Ex.: E: *But wasn't it focused on reading?* F: *Yeah, but this topic came from the Secretariat of Education*). When presenting controversial questions, different positions, questions, counter-arguments, examples, oppositions, explanations, acceptances, agreements, restrictions, support, suggestions and conclusions, they created the opportunity for new ideas to arise. Because participants presented their positions with a strong attention to the way they would work with the concept in the development of the educators (teachers, coordinators, principals), there was the opportunity to listen and contrast ideas. The intentionality of transforming community was expressed in the way they introduced the connection to the work to be developed in the school community. Participants were clearly not passive in the face of reality and, although contradictions occurred, they were essential triggers of the development of the group.

Accordingly, many of the activities suggested and described became part of the tasks that guided the organization of the educator's workshop.

Increasing Collective Awareness for Shared Responsibility

During the second workshop after the preparatory meeting (previously discussed), researchers invited teachers, principals, and coordinators to perform as if they were participating in a Poetry Clothes Line Soirée. The conductor of the workshop instructed participants to pretend they had been invited to a soirée by a friend and that they decided to go and enjoy it as much as possible. The conductor of the workshop also directed group members that they should get in the mood of the situation by forgetting they were at the university and by imagining they were at the host's house. The performance took place in a different room that was organized with poems hung from clothes lines (see photo below) where people could move around and read. The soirée involved reading poems aloud, mentioning feelings and emotions that some of the poems triggered. By the end of the soirée, some participants even cried while reading or dedicating the poems to one another. Participants were then asked to return to the previous room to discuss the event performed.



Figure 1: Workshop: Poetry Clothes Line - 2010

The conversation in appendix 2 is part of this discussion. In this conversation there was a conflict generated by the need to express the emotional and cognitive impact of the performance on each person. The discussion of the performance emphasized the opportunity for participants not only to experiment with a situation of sharing reading but also to critically reflect about its importance to them. When discussing the activity, participants not only said what they thought about it but also offered opinions about whether they liked it or not. They told stories from their personal life, presented comparisons, discussed generic inferences about needs and wants of their cultural group and presented their impressions and feelings. This generated a spectrum of possibilities to draw from in creating their understanding of what reading is and how they could deal with it. They also had a chance to recreate the meaning of a *soirée* and of this reading experience in their lives. Moreover, they dealt with the influence it could have on them as a basis for reflecting about how this activity can affect their young children.

When one of the educators (E4, turn 15) described her preschool experience and everyone congratulated her, they might also have been reflecting about how such events and experiences could create an important impression on their own students. When reporting on her childhood experience with reading a poem aloud and the rejection she suffered in that context, the educator found support from her colleagues, expressed by their questions, cheering up and applause. According to the educator, the performance served as a moment for her to overcome the trauma she had once faced.

*15E4: May I speak? I did not know what a *soirée* was. I went there... And you said we could enjoy it, and maybe not, then I was more comfortable. I thought, "I'll see what it is." And I began to read. And actually, I was enchanted by it, but I know that this was because I remembered an episode from my preschool days. I'd be the person who would read to all children. Only I could not read well at that time because I could not get the cadence, could not put the letters together faster. So it was a friend of mine who read for the group.*

16Q: And you remembered, right?

17E4: So to me at this time was: now I'll read it!

Because it took her through a real experience and not only through a narrative of a once lived experience, the effect of this experience is stronger than the simple presentation of information. Through play, as pointed out by Vygotsky (1930), people have a chance to go beyond who they are and can transform who they will be. In the continuation of this discussion, some participants pointed out how important it would be for their students to participate in activities such as what they had just experienced.

Once again, the intentionality of developing a reading community, in which reading is a source of cultural participation and enjoyment with others, becomes reinforced by the experience. The collective discussion of the performance and the subjective experience of exchanging views, ideas and feelings about it contributed to the creative thinking of the participants. New senses were produced about reading activities through the sharing of a collective meaning about the experiences they had together. Because they used the performance as an arena to experience the concept of “developing a reading community” and as the basis for discussing it, they could deal with the concept in different formats that, in turn, gave rise to different perspectives or voices that could echo possibilities of meaning construction for the children as well.

Engaging and Transforming

At each participating school, teachers, coordinators and principals organized their own specific sub-projects, based on the theme of the *Learn through Playing* Project: developing a reading community through shared reading activities. As a guiding motive that directed and gave intentionality to and organized the actions of the project participants, the theme was enacted with the young children through performances that played with an interesting reality that was not necessarily part of their everyday lives. In the examples to follow, the school chose to work with book club reading and going to a library.

As part of the project, the teacher of a group of four year-olds took them to a patio where she read to them using some puppets. The young children sat on a blanket (see photo below) and pretended to be participating in a book club at a park. This is a very unusual activity for young children from the impoverished communities in São Paulo. Before reading, the teacher asked if anyone already knew the story of Cinderella. All young children said yes in a chorus. After that, she asked which character

they liked best. Next, the teacher started reading and stopped at certain parts to create suspense and to question students about certain aspects of the story, just as if they were participating in a real shared reading event.

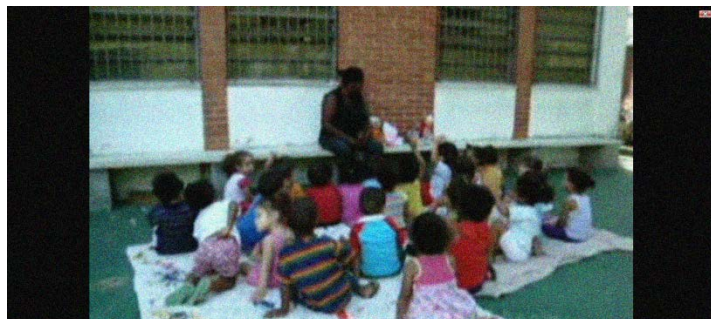


Figure 2: Reading at the Patio - 2010

In this example, children could experience in a play format the context of the situation, and the pleasure and the challenge of being at a shared reading event. They also learned how to behave and what to do and expect once the teacher discussed with them afterwards about their behavior and the way they acted during the reading performance. The performance and the conversation about it were practical experiences and reflections that turned out to support the value of such shared reading activities. By enacting the book club activity and discussing it, the young children could create new meanings about reading and belonging to a reading community. Thus, they developed new personal senses that could trigger future possibilities of how to participate in social events and in society as a whole through reading with others.

When presented with such pleasurable and challenging situations, young children stretch their potential and can create new possibilities of being (Holzman 2009). They had the opportunity to learn about the story and to deal with reading as a cognitive strategy. Clearly, some of the initial cognitive aspects of reading were being developed while they experienced this activity: ex. the understanding of the usual words for starting a narrative, the postures of reading, the need for a problematization and resolution, and how intonation changes in relation to these movements in the text, the directionality of the sentences, the relationship between words on the paper and ideas presented, the conventionality of graphic symbols that should be followed when reading which they recognize when they point to letters and words in the text, the importance of paying attention to images and of showing that to the audience while reading. Moreover, they could profit from a social

practice from the social and cultural background of their society. They were also invited to see the importance and the pleasure of what they learned, not only for themselves but also for the whole community.

In the performance, meaning was being produced not as a specific predetermined and particular end or behavior, but as the means for transforming the community. When participating in the reading activity, children could experience a context not common in their or their parents' everyday lives. Through this, and the enjoyment of it, young children start to want to have more as part of their daily lives. In turn, this can begin to trigger changes in the way their families enjoy their everyday context: to include reading activities as part of what they do and who they can become.

Therefore, some weeks later, young children and teachers in the same project organized shared reading moments in the class, following a similar pattern. They took home some of the school books they got in a library-like performance. After they read them at home, they had a book club where they read them back to their peers (from the same or another class). In one examples of this (see picture below), a three-year old sat on a chair while his peers sat in a semi-circle on the floor. In order to start his reading session he said: *one, two, three, four, nine*, with the special rhythm normally used by his teacher as part of the convention for starting a reading session. Afterwards, he started looking at the book and pretended to read: *Once upon a time, there was a little red riding hood. She went to the forest.* He stopped, looked at his friends and asked: *Look here. See! Where is the forest? Can you see?* After some young children responded his question, he kept "reading" the story.



Figure 4: Reading to Friends - 2010

In this context, the young children experienced possibilities for having fun/pleasure with the books and the moments of sharing reading. Readers felt responsible for the enjoyment of their peers, for

engaging them in the activity. They assumed some responsibility for creating a reading community within their immediate setting. Therefore, turning reading into part of their experience was not the teachers' responsibility alone. The young children also became important members in the collective intentional movement of the object through the network of activities, expanding the network of activities in an intentional way. Performance, as a kind of support, enabled the young children to go beyond their familiar perceptions and possibilities and gave them a chance to see themselves as active agents in the construction of the reading community. In contrast with the educator reported above who experienced a sense of failure as a child reader, here young children feel comfortable and responsible for the development and the collective enjoyment of the activity. In a collaborative way, they were challenged by situations that required collectively overcoming constraints. Therefore, all shared in the creation of a new meaning -- a reading community -- thus expanding the collective understanding that was developed from researchers, discussed by the educators and reconstructed by the young children.

Enhancing community development

In the parents' meeting of that school, teachers, parents, coordinators and principals discussed the impact of the project. Many parents revealed how they had changed reading in their home because of the school project. And, they discussed some essential issues related to the focus of developing a reading community. Regarding this, it is essential to reiterate that many who live in poverty have rare moments of relaxation. On any free days, they generally work in their houses and take care of their families. If they have any free time, they sleep more hours, just relax, watch TV, go to the church or choose other activities in their cultural communities. Mostly, these do not include reading or writing.

In most of these communities, libraries are uncommon and, even if present, are not part of their cultural practices. Many parents cannot read or struggle in reading and use it just for very necessary circumstances, almost never for pleasure. To read for pleasure, in certain contexts, is even considered weird. Therefore, the project included in the lives of the young children a new possibility for their leisure time either alone or with their parents or older children in their families. This instigated different and new practices in their communities.

In the examples that follow, parents involved in the project emphasized that they could feel their young children were developing important reading skills for future success in academic life. Moreover, they supported the importance of the project by explaining how they changed their own habits and started to spend more time with their young children and/or families in reading activities.

Their young children took books home for them to read together, the school staff required parents to contribute to the school library. Most had never been to a library before and, when invited, did not even know how to act. Moreover, their young children helped them change their own attitudes towards reading and sharing reading moments.

This can be seen in their discussion during the meeting.

P for parent	Utterances
P1:	And this initiative for loaning books is wonderful because I really never had the habit of reading too much for my son before.
P2:	It's true, I never had the habit of reading, but now with the loan of the books I started reading.
P 3:	The other day I saw that she brought the same book and so she said to me: 'Mom, I still do not understand the story'. And she wanted to so much.
P 4:	Yesterday, for example, my son got nursery rhymes. When he grows older he will not have so many problems with reading, because he is experiencing it now. This reading also reunited family members.

Excepts 3: Parents' Meeting - 2010



Figure 4: Parents' Meeting - 2010

Some parents still direct their reflections about reading as if it were mainly related to the development of academic skill (*When he grows older he will not have so many problems with reading, because he is experiencing it now.*). This is a result of the process of “academizing” pre-school in Brazil: parents are eager for their young children to learn how to read because they know that many children, from poor communities, graduate from high school with very precarious reading skills. However, they also realize that reading can be a family activity (P1 and P4); that they can change their own relationship with reading, as well, (P2) and that reading can bring pleasure and understanding (P3).

In this way, the Project opened new possibilities of seeing reading not as an individual practice but as a way of transforming community realities. The initial collective object of the network of activities was transformed into a motive for each activity. And through participating in these activities, subjects were oriented toward collective achievement.

This movement demanded that each activity created the meaning of a reading community as an object of the activity. And this object became a tool in what could be called a Creative Chain of activities (Liberali 2009) that was developed to enhance the creation of a reading community. For each activity, subjects kept traces of previous activities. At the same time, their support, explanations, descriptions, definitions, performances as part of a reading community developed means of going beyond the previous limitations of their own ideas. Therefore, the transformation occurred not only in terms of individuals changing their ways of seeing and participating in the world through reading but also by means of the transformation of the collectivity as a reading community. Each participant had to cross boundaries to reach new possibilities of being and becoming. Obviously, the meaning of a reading community sharing reading experiences was infused with contradictions, but it became the driving force for all the participants.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter and the project described was based on the idea of a “Creative Chain” (Liberali 2009) in which a collective intentionality of what a reading community could be constructed, analyzed, evaluated, criticized, reconstructed, practiced, and reformulated in a collective way. Community building and transformation were enhanced in this process triggered by families’, children’s, educators’ and researchers’ development.

According to Vygotsky (1933/1991), the human capacity to imagine and plan their future; i.e., intentionality, is what creates human freedom. In order to achieve this, the author (1934a/1962) states that meanings act as tools connecting human beings. In intentionally interwoven activities, the chain of senses grows infinitely, allowing meaning to be creatively renovated. Therefore, meaning and sense are both tied in collective intentionality. In the Creative Chain of activities, the interplay of senses in producing new meanings expresses both the individual’s subjectivity and the collective possibility for transformation into a new totality throughout the communities. In other words, it corresponds both to the views expressed by the subject and to the construction of the joint meaning the community seeks. This joint construction belongs to the collectivity and, therefore, to the whole.

Changes in collective meaning seem to stem from the struggle established between different subjective senses that are created in the process of active and responsive understanding. In a collaborative setting (Magalhães 2010 and Magalhães and Fidalgo 2010), argumentative dialogue can be responsible for the expansion and restriction of the “objects” (i.e., meanings) that will intentionally fulfill, not individual needs, but the needs of an interdependent community (Liberali 2009). That is, when differing opinions are exposed and combined to create new ones, some of the original perspectives have to be left behind. However, this new object expresses the general interest of the community; it can be its shared motive. Thus, it cannot fulfill simply one person’s need but the needs expressed by the community actively engaged in its production. In this sense, it refers to the totality not as a universal one, but as created through the debate generated by the conflict of ideas.

Such transformation of individuals in the process of creating a reading community also entails that each participant is committed to transforming the whole. The project emphasizes not only the transformation of individuals but, as a result, also the transformation of the whole community. In very poor communities, such as the ones served by the project, a tendency exists to emphasize the development of the child and opportunity of the child to overcome his/her restriction in order to achieve a better life. In this project, this is also important. However, more than focusing on changing the individual’s condition, the emphasis relies on making each participant responsible and responsive in transforming the conditions of the community itself.

It is not enough, then, that the young children become efficient and effective readers, for instance. It is essential that their parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, neighbours are also engaged in transforming their contexts so that the whole community can become a reading community where sharing books, discussing films and music, (etc.) build a springboard for the transformation of everyone’s life. Therefore, the Creative Chain is seen as essential for making everyone responsible for the transformation of the whole. Each participant in an activity becomes interdependently responsible for the development of the chain and for the transformation of the whole.

When each person realizes that expressing, contrasting and supporting a position contributes to the expansion of the general understanding about the topics in discussion, they start to see themselves as important agents in the construction of the group and of its activities. When they understand that their role is not to impose ideas but is to be responsible for promoting discussion on essential issues for the realization of senses in the production of shared meanings, there is a change in the way discourse and power relations are organized. Senses and meaning begin to intermingle and new

opportunities of understanding and creating are devised. Consequently, concepts, such as the example of a reading community, move in all directions, in the spiral of the Creative Chain to enhance community transformation.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Initial of the person	Utterance	Analysis/coding
1F:	Aspect number seven: Theme of the year?	<i>Controversial question</i> ¹⁴
2E:	Reading.	presentation of <i>position 1</i>
3F:	Umm ... (twists her nose in doubt)	presentation of <i>opposition</i>
4M:	Reading workshops and the soirée.	presentation of the <i>position 2</i>
5E:	The subject is reading, actually.	Presentation of position 1 by pointing it out as a subject
6F:	It is not. It is developing a reading community.	presentation of <i>opposition</i> to position 1 and reestablishment of position 2
7M:	Reading community.	mirroring
8F:	Developing a community of readers.	repetition of position taken
9E:	But wasn't it focused on reading?	<i>Questioning</i> position 2 using the assumption that there was a previous agreement on working on the topic: reading marked by the negative past tense "wasn't"
10F:	Yeah, but this topic came from the Secretariat of Education ¹⁵ .	presentation of <i>counter argument</i> to position 1 based on the source of

¹⁴

Italicized items correspond to the argumentative categories analyzed.

		authority of the support presented to position 1
11E:	From SME. (nodding)	<i>recognition</i> of position 2 and of support presented
12C:	We would have to ask several questions related to that so they can understand. There is the soirée and eh?	Presentation of <i>example</i> (soiree) that may serve as support for position 2 - “developing a reading community”
13E:	But the soirée is a social activity.	<i>Opposition</i> to the example as support for position 2 with definition of the example as part of the means to work with the students, and not as the theme of the year
14F:	It is a social activity that they will do ...	Attempt to <i>explain</i> the support – interrupted
15C:	Is it a social activity? So we have to pose several questions that would give foundations for the social activities that would be developed.	<i>Acceptance</i> of counterargument and attempt to find a common agreement with explanation as support to how they should change from a focus on a task to a focus on the theme
16F:	We could do this: contexts for reading, shared reading activities (writes the task on the planning chart on the computer). And they will have to tell us what they are, what they know.	<i>Conclusion</i> , trying to put together the focus on the “reading” and the “contexts for reading”

Excerpt 1: Preparatory Meeting - 2010

Appendix 2

Initials ¹⁶	Utterance	Analysis /coding
1F:	Who has ever participated in a poetry soirée here?	<i>Question to introduce</i> the theme of the year: developing reading communities through shared reading activities
	(People raised their hands)	
2F:	How did you do it? How did you participate? Was it like this? Was it different? How was it?	<i>Questions to recover</i> participants' <i>previous experience and knowledge</i> about the topic -- the senses they had in relation to the social activity performed
3E1:	It was more or less like this.	presentation of <i>position</i> in relation to the similarities
4F:	What did people do?	Question for <i>description</i>
5E1:	The only difference was that it was a music soirée. And each person wanted to sing a song. In the end, everybody hugged and danced.	<i>Description with comparison</i>

¹⁵ SME stands for Municipal Secretariat of Education

¹⁶ Initials of the person and E for educator with the number to identify different ones

6E:	So for you the issue of emotion was important, right?	<i>Question for point of view</i> , pointing to the performance enacted by the group
7E1:	It was indeed!	Presentation of <i>point of view</i>
8F:	People hugged one another and were involved.	Presentation of <i>support</i> for position presented with <i>description</i>
9E1:	Everybody was involved.	Support for position presented
10F:	Has anyone here been involved in this soirée we performed? Has anyone felt...	<i>Question for point of view</i>
11E2:	The moment I entered, my thought was: "Hopefully I'll find a sonnet by Vinicius de Moraes" because I'm in love with him. And I found it! When I found it because I saw <i>Soneto do Amigo</i> (italic) and I'm in love with it, then my wish was to read it aloud. When I saw <i>A Luz dos Olhos Teus</i> , I immediately wanted to sing it. Because it takes you by the same emotion.	<i>Support with description and explanation</i> of position taken
12F:	You got caught, right? At that moment you felt like...	<i>Reinforcement of support</i> presented – interrupted
	(all people talking together)	
13F:	And you? Yes, you.	<i>Question about point of view and directing the event</i>
14E3:	I thought it was very nice because we have always desired to be a star, recite poetry and there is no such place for this, because it seems that this is an old thing – soirée -- and everyone will feel something strange about it, but I found it nice to have the courage to recite, read or memorize it. It is as if we were really in those old soirees, we recited and everyone was listening. I felt a bit like that...	Presentation of a <i>point of view</i> with <i>support</i> based on an <i>analysis</i> of desires and <i>comparison</i> to cultural recovery of soirée
	(all at the same time)	
15E4:	May I speak? I did not know what a soirée was. I went there... And you said we could enjoy it, and maybe not, then I was more comfortable. I thought, "I'll see what it is." And I began to read. And actually, I was enchanted by it, but I know that this was because I remembered an episode from my preschool days. I'd be the person who would read to all	Presentation of <i>feelings</i> towards soiree as introduction to the <i>position</i> taken Presentation of <i>position taken</i> and <i>support</i> related to <i>comparison</i> to previous experience

	children. Only I could not read well at that time because I could not get the cadence, could not put the letters together faster. So it was a friend of mine who read for the group.	
16Q:	And you remembered, right?	<i>Question for confirmation</i>
17E4:	So to me at this time was: now I'll read it!	<i>Description of situation as support</i>
	(All cheering and clapping)	
18E:	It was very beautiful. I was very excited and I did not know why. And you read so fluently. You really made it happen!	Presentation of <i>point of view</i> based on the <i>feelings</i> triggered by E4 reports
	(All speaking at the same time)	

Excerpt 2: Workshop: Poetry Clothes Line - 2010

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Children participating and developing agency in and across various social practices

Charlotte Højholt and Dorte Kousholt

Abstract This article addresses how situated studies of children's participation and social interplay can contribute to theory on the development of children. The article focuses on children's personal agency in relation to conducting an everyday life across different social practices. The everyday life of children in Nordic countries constitutes a situation where children live their life across societal institutions (such as the family, kindergarten, school, institutions for children's leisure time) and together with children of the same age. This draws attention to the meaning of child communities in relation to children's personal development. Children's families and peer relations intermingle and make up meanings for each other and for the children's development of agency. This approach gives a certain view on social problems in relation to children's life. In particular, the article will discuss the situated significations and social conflicts around and for children and their personal agency. The empirical background is several research projects observing and interviewing children and their adults in their different developmental settings, such as their family, kindergartens, schools, institutions for children's leisure time and special help arrangements.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate an approach to children's development through situated studies of children's everyday life and theory of social practice. The chapter focuses on children's personal agency in relation to conducting everyday life across different social practices. A central point is to illustrate how children develop ways of conducting their life, not just through adjusting to given conditions, but also through arranging conditions together with others, contributing to social practice and taking part in negotiations about different matters in their life. In this way, the possibilities for developing a conduct of life are connected to possibilities for *participation* and *influence* in different places.

Through examples from observations of children's everyday life and social interplay, it will be illustrated how situated knowledge about children's life and activities can contribute to knowledge about *general challenges* in relation to developing as a person in concrete historical contexts. In addition, we will point to how this approach changes the focus from individual categorizations of

developmental disturbances, to social conflicts and contradictions in societal practices, which in different ways are arranged for the development of children.

The everyday life of children in Nordic countries constitutes a situation where children live their life across societal institutions (such as the family, kindergarten, school, institutions for children's leisure time) and together with children of the same age. This draws attention to the meaning of child communities in relation to children's personal development. Furthermore it illuminates how different adults are connected in a structural distribution of responsibility in relation to children and have different perspectives on the development of children. In the chapter we will focus on social conflicts around and for children and how social conflicts may constitute problematic conditions and form a basis for personal conflicts in relation to a plurality of engagements. This approach gives a certain view on social problems and how the social background of the children seem to have situated meanings in the interplay between their different life contexts.

Following up on this, the aim is to develop analytical concepts to explore children's ordinary life as a background for understanding specific difficulties in relation to development. Therefore, we begin the discussion by touching on theoretical challenges in relation to the concept of development and by giving a short insight into our methodological way of dealing with these challenges. Then follows a combination of empirical examples and theoretical discussions. To conclude, we recapitulate our perspective on how children develop their participation in relation to concrete developmental challenges and possibilities in and across various social practices.

Theoretical challenges to deal with

In relation to development the inner connection between concrete personal contributions and societal structural conditions seems to be a theoretical question with several challenges. Developmental psychology has been criticised for being *abstract* in its study of "the general child" and for focusing on developing universal models that are used for individual categorisation and differentiation of children (Burman 1994, Haavind 1987, 2011). Among other issues this raises a question about how to explore and analyse situated social conditions?

Researchers within the childhood research tradition have critiqued the tendency in developmental psychology to focus on children primarily as "becomings" (understanding the child's present situation in the light of future adulthood) and neglecting the structural aspect of childhood (James et al. 1998, Qvortrup et al. 1994). To address this, a scientific challenge seems to be how to involve children as agents with perspectives on their present everyday life? The childhood research tradition has in turn been criticised for overlooking the *personal aspect* of development or disregarding

development (e.g. Hedegaard 2009). To us this points to a theoretical dilemma in relation to involving personal aspects of structural interplay.

Concerning theorizing about development, such critiques invoke a challenging dilemma: When we take into consideration the mentioned critique of developmental psychology, and leave a universal phase model for development, how can we discuss and evaluate specific developmental conditions? Developmental psychology encounters a need for new ways of building theory, as well as developing concepts that are useful in concrete analysis of developmental processes. Valsiner (1997/1986) points to the problem that our interpretations of empirical observations of children's behaviour can vary randomly depending on our pre-understanding, and that the solution is not more empirical results but "theoretical breakthroughs" (see also Klaue 1989). The ambition in this chapter is to work with theoretical development through empirical analysis of children's everyday life in different institutional practices. This must be done in a concrete way related to particular societal practices, as well as to children's personal ways of taking part in activities in their everyday life.

Children's lives take place in several contexts from early childhood (family, institutional settings etc.) and their developmental conditions are distributed over several contexts which must be understood in relation to each other. The overall configuration of developmental possibilities and constraints is cross-contextually constituted. Still, attention to the mutual influences among the multiple and diverse social contexts that form children's life is frequently underexposed in studies of children's development (Lewis and Watson-Gegeo 2004, Seymour 2004, Singer 1993). In the approach set out in this chapter, the cross-contextual perspectives draw on a conceptualisation of persons as participants in structures of social practices (Dreier 2008). Knowledge about structural aspects of children's lives is obtained through analysis of situated participation and movements in and through interconnected social practices.

This is in contrast to a figure of development as a question of progressing through developmental crises without landing in developmental disturbances. In such a figure the developmental challenges seem to be to find a balance with the new competences and social demands - and difficulties seem to be conceptualised as risks and threats to a quite individualised process of development.

You could say that developmental psychology has contributed through its traditions more to categorisations of developmental problems than to knowledge about *how* children develop and live their lives. Thoughts about development have been closely connected to thoughts about deviance from norms or standards and, and in this way, we are offered tools for differentiating between categories of children and between categories of problems, but not much insight into the concrete situations of development in a child's life. We will discuss how such categorisations make up

conditions for the understanding of children's developmental dilemmas and the organisation of developmental support.

Following up on the critique of developmental psychology concerning the top-down or adult-centric approach to development (Thorne 1993), the chapter builds on recent contextual developmental psychology contributions in relation to studying children's lives across different contexts, with an emphasis on *children's perspectives* (Andenæs 1997, 2011, Fler and Hedegaard 2010, Gulbrandsen 1998, Hedegaard et al. 2012, Hviid 2001, Højholt 2006, 2012a, Kousholt 2008, 2011).

These challenges lead to an unfolding of what we will term a *decentred perspective*¹⁷ on development. This entails understanding and investigating development from the 'ordinary everyday life' – and in this way from multiple perspectives in complex social practice. Hence it follows that we need to analyse children and adults as constituting developmental conditions for each other.

'Conditions' is a key concept in this thinking and points to the way societal matters can be conceptualised as the concrete possibilities, constraints and demands persons deal with in their everyday life and how they experience the meanings of these in different ways (Holzkamp 2013).

This turns our methodological focus to participation in a plurality of social practices and the situated interplay between persons.

Methodological background

To connect the *personal* way of taking part in social life (and developing precisely this participation) and the contextual *conditions* for children's lives, we will anchor a concept of development in a theoretical approach to social practice. In this approach, the historical and conflictual nature of social processes is emphasised (e.g. Axel 2002, Chaiklin et al 1999, Holland and Lave 2001, Juul Jensen 1987, 1999, 2001, Lave 2008, 2011). What we learn from such an approach is that the basis, as well as the perspective of development, is fundamentally conflictual – not as a disturbance or error.

Conflicts are perceived as an inherent part of social practice.

The social arrangements, in which children participate, are characterised by social difference, changes and different standpoints regarding these changes and how to deal with differences, ambiguity and contradictory concerns and considerations. People develop their ways of taking part here through social coordination, negotiations, conflicts and collaboration, and their subjective development is an aspect of participation in social practice (Højholt 2008). This is a theoretical conceptualisation with roots in cultural historical approaches (Daniels and Hedegaard 2011, Holland

¹⁷ Dreier (2003) argues for a *decentered* perspective on therapeutic practice, in the sense that therapy must be understood in terms of the way it is included and can be used in the client's everyday conduct of life. Similarly, decentered in this chapter denotes to explore development from the perspectives of the complex daily lives of children.

et al. 1998, Rogoff 2003, Stetsenko 2008) and with a focus on the subjective dimensions of structural interconnected practices (Dreier 2003, Holzkamp 2013, Schraube 2013, Tolman and Maiers 1991).

The everyday life of children is theorized in relation to their participation and engagements in various social practices (Fleer and Hedegaard 2010, Hviid 2001, 2008, Højholt 2006, 2008, Kousholt 2008, 2011). In this chapter, we connect participation to living one's life in different places, having participation as a point of departure as well as a developmental potential. In this sense, 'participation' has a more existential meaning than e.g. in Rogoff et al 2007, where the authors connect the concept to development of 'cultural repertoires' (from earlier experiences) through participation in everyday routines and practices. In the present understanding, the children develop their own ways of participating and their grasp of various issues and social complexity.

To address how children actively arrange their lives in institutional arrangements across contexts and in relation to a plurality of different demands, possibilities, contradictions, communities and conflicts, we employ the concept of 'conduct of everyday life' (Dreier 2008, Holzkamp 2013, Højholt and Schraube forthcoming). The concept is meant to connect societal life conditions and personal ways of dealing with these in daily life –children and their parents act every day to live their lives, make plans and priorities, pursue ideas and deal with necessities – in a continual coordination with others¹⁸.

In relation to the conduct of everyday life the concept of social *self-understanding* points to how persons develop their understanding of themselves through changing social conditions and ways of taking part (Dreier 2008, Holzkamp 2013). Changes are connected to changes in positions in social contexts and to how the personal *meanings* of these contexts change through life. Subjects change their perspectives on their life contexts and, in relation to that, they change their way of influencing these, or they leave them (as children e.g. leave kindergarten in order to join new contexts in their life.)

The empirical background for the chapter is different research projects observing and interviewing children in their different developmental settings, such as their family, kindergartens, schools, institutions for children's leisure time and special help arrangements. In such contexts professionals have different kinds of responsibilities, tasks and perspectives on the children and their development.

Participating, observing and interviewing both children and adults *across* children's different life contexts have been a common basis for our research. By observing several participants across contexts, we attempt to generate compound empirical material that makes it possible to analyse

¹⁸ This is not meant as a normative assessment of how persons succeed in handling situations in their life, but as a way to emphasise that they *do* act, handle and deal with conditions of their life.

social practice from different perspectives and positions and thereby gain an insight into complex social processes and different possibilities for participating (Højholt and Kousholt 2014, Kousholt forthcoming).

The examples we draw on in the chapter are from a research project with 4 after-school centres (also described in Højholt 2012b, Kousholt 2012). Danish children from age 6-10 continue their day after school hours together in different types of leisure-time institutions. Most after-school centres are located at the school and are usually quite large institutions (120-200 children and 14-20 professionals), characterised by divisions into different kinds of rooms and outdoor spaces and with a range of offers for activities to join, such as woodwork, needlework, football, computers or music. With local variations, the children are free to move between rooms and activities – but with restrictions such as waiting for one's turn, requiring permission to enter particular rooms or requiring the presence of a grown-up etc.

This way of structuring the institutional practice usually leaves considerable room for the children to organise activities of their own choice. For this reason, this time of day and this age accentuate a general challenge for the children *to develop their ways of arranging their life*: They have to decide, choose among activities and relationships, plan their participation in different matters, negotiate and contribute to the conditions of their daily life. They have to develop a *personal conduct of life*. This specific developmental context has turned our attention to this issue. Children encounter other kinds of developmental challenges in other countries and historical times with other challenges in relation to conducting everyday life. However, the idea is to learn about general connections – such as the connection between personal development and social conditions – through contextual variations (Axel 2002, Juul Jensen 1999).

Conflictual connections between life contexts

To illustrate conflictual connections between life contexts and how that constitutes contradictory developmental conditions, we will turn to an example of a boy struggling to be part of children's communities in an after-school centre.

In this particular research project, we followed children that were referred to a special school during class hours, but continued in the after-school centre at the general school. This kind of special help intervention is designed to optimise the children's possibilities for returning to the general school. However these interventions, that are arranged in order to support these children's school lives, also create new challenges and problems. In general, inclusion is a central focus in current educational

policy in Denmark and there is a political awareness of intergenerational transmission of educational and social problems. In the political conflicts about these problems the responsibility seems to be displaced between the different parties and different contexts.

Paul is one of the boys we met. Through kindergarten class (reception class), there were numerous conflicts between him and the teachers, as well as conflicts between his mother and the school and the after-school centre. Three month into 1st grade, Paul was referred to a family class at a special school. He spends his school hours here together with one of his parents, since this intervention is also intended to change parental support. In the specific cases, we often meet quite varying perspectives on these interventions: Paul's parents worry about the relationships between Paul and his former class mates and describe how, since kindergarten, it has been difficult for Paul to "get in contact with the other children in a good way". Seen from their perspective, Paul's relationship to the other children was improving. The issues that the teachers problematized about Paul's bad language and oppositional behaviour are issues that the parents do not recognise at home. They talk about how Paul had a difficult time in the general class but that he nevertheless regarded himself as having friends and as belonging there. Paul's mother is angry with the professionals; she feels that they insinuate that her way of being a mother is the basis of the problems. Paul's parents are both young and uneducated, and he is, in discussions about the problems, regarded as having a "weak background".

The pedagogues (after-school centre professionals) explain that communication with the special school can be difficult. Sometimes small practical matters have enormous importance, such as when one boy was not included on the class telephone list and was then not invited to birthdays. They are concerned about the conflicts with Paul's mother and Paul's situation in school, but they tend not to notice Paul's way of participating in the after-school centre - "he looks like he's occupied" - "We don't see much of him."

Paul is not noticeably very upset, crying or asking for help, but observations of him during his day revealed his struggles and dilemmas in relation to participating and contributing in specific situations in the after-school centre. He actively seeks out the other children and tries to engage in their play. He often succeeds in becoming a participant for a while, although he rarely becomes a central actor, exerting an influence on the progress of the activities and he repeatedly loses his grip on the social interplay and is left alone. It is not that he is visibly excluded. Rather, it is a question of how he is able to contribute to and influence what is occurring in the children's communities –as the following example will illustrate.

Paul builds together with Thomas and Mark. Paul and Thomas talk about Lego Star Wars and Batman computer games. After some excited chat, Paul proposes "should we play Batman?" They agree and talk about how to play. Then Mark's father arrives. Mark asks his father if he can play with Thomas at home.

Paul protests: "but we had agreed to play..." (addressed to Thomas).

Thomas suggests: We can play all three of us. Mark's father look at the three boys crowding around him – he seems a little confused.

The father says: "I do not have Paul's parents' phone number". The father suggests "you can play tomorrow or another day".

Paul suggests: "we can play at my home - I have a remote controlled car of good quality." Paul says to Thomas (with an imploring voice) "I would like to play with you, come on!" Thomas and Mark try in vain to persuade Mark's father. Mark leaves with his father and Thomas leaves the room. Paul runs after Thomas, who no longer seems interested in playing. Paul looks at some other boys playing computer games, wanders around a bit and then he sits down beside some boys. One boy says: "I'm visiting Simon today." Paul: "Nobody can come home to me - I don't have anybody who is coming home to me"

Paul is struggling to join in and participate. He tries to make himself visible and attractive to the other children. He is struggling to make his contributions count. The professionals remark at the time that Paul's strength is "that he is not shy". Note that there are several opportunities in the interplay between the children ("we can play all three of us" - and "maybe another day"). Playing together at each other's homes is a significant part of building friendships and connecting different life contexts. Getting someone to come home with you seems important to the children we have observed. This insight into developmental conditions indicates complexity and social conflict, and also illustrates how a boy continually relates to this complexity and to the opportunities to take part as an influential participant, contributing to the organisation of social practice in a way that will generate further possibilities. Is it possible from the illustrated situated interplay to discuss possibilities for personal development?

Conducting an everyday life is connected to participation in a plurality of social contexts and communities, characterised by different demands and possibilities, transitions and change – changes not just in the different contexts, but also in the composition of them. In relation to this, development becomes a question of developing one's participation in complexity, to take part in different ways, different places and, at the same time, to connect one's participation in different places in a way that

participation in one place will also be meaningful in other places (Højholt 2012a, Kousholt 2011).

The relationship between children's family and school is significant in this regard and children have *different possibilities* for making connections between the home and the school (Edwards 2002). We analyse the example above as an instance of how *social conflicts* between different parties (e.g. about who has the responsibility for what, or about what is important in relation to development) turn into *personal conflicts* for the children (Højholt 2006). Paul (like many other children when professionals worry about their social background) has difficulties in relation to connecting his participation across family and school, and now also between his school life and leisure time, since he is not a stable part of the social coordination among the children. His belonging is at stake and his adults are in conflict about where he should belong and where the social practice should be changed: is it e.g. a question of another kind of upbringing and parental support or of social possibilities in the professional settings?

To understand the *concrete* dilemmas for Paul, we also need knowledge from the other children, knowledge about the general challenges of developing in and across these specific societal contexts.

Children arranging communities

Due to the last decades of empirical studies in children's everyday lives, we know that children's interplay has a major significance for their personal processes of learning and development, and that children's perspectives are directed towards each other (Frønes 2009, Haavind 2003, Hviid 2008, Kampmann 2005, Kousholt 2011, Rogoff 2003, Schwartz 2007, Stanek 2011). Observations of children in difficulties show their concerns in relation to belonging to social communities and their personal experiences with social conflicts and exclusion (Røn Larsen 2011, Kousholt 2012). Conditions for taking part here are connected to the general premises and dynamics at play in communities among and around the children. But how do children arrange their communities and their personal participation in a plurality of activities and relations? Children's developmental contexts are societally and historically structured and, at the same time, the children themselves are involved in organising, negotiating and contributing to different activities in their life.

To decide, organise and orientate oneself in social communities is also a developmental task, as it forms the fundamental developmental conditions for the afternoons of children at this age in Denmark. The pedagogues in the institutions for children's leisure-time emphasise that the *initiative* should come from the children themselves - they find it important for the development of the chil-

dren. The children must learn how to arrange their daily life, how to organise and cooperate, how to resolve conflicts, how to choose and decide what they want to do during their leisure time. The pedagogical tasks in these contexts relate to organising possibilities and support for such processes.

A very striking point when you observe the children's lives in the institutions for children's leisure-time is that *many different things are at stake at the same time*. You observe different activities, groups of children, conversations, conflicts, different kinds of fun and plenty of efforts related to starting up activities, lots of interruptions and activities breaking up. To grown-ups - as for instance researchers - it can be difficult to find your way in this universe: to find the children you know, their activities and places and what is going on among them. The children themselves move in and out of all this in a quite unnoticed way. Their social life is characterised by participants moving around between places, activities and continuous replacement in the constellations of children. Still, the children have to orientate in this social complexity and in this regard they use each other - asking peers about where to find a friend, about the plans of the adults, about rules and about the organisation of specific contexts (for examples see Højholt 2001, 2012ab, Højholt and Kousholt 2014, Stanek 2011). In this way, development is also about *orientating* oneself in life and relates to the possibilities for that. The children's processes of orientation are active processes, characterised by taking part in new practices using new potentialities and using them in relation to personal engagements and concerns. The children take part in continuous changes in relation to where, with whom and what they are doing. It might look quite easy or even accidental, but if we want to know something about concrete developmental conditions and movements, we should be able to see how the children themselves *coordinate* their activities and communities, e.g. how they *negotiate* their participation and their influence on what is going on. These processes involve common efforts and flexibility (and possibilities for contributing to and influencing social practice).

A lot of the children's negotiations are about who can take part, about where and how to start up common activities and about how to *maintain and carry through* their plans. The last point is particularly complicated in a context with a large number of children, and plenty of changes and different interests. Activities are constantly challenged by interruptions, conflicts and dissolutions. To maintain engagement in the activities they have chosen, as well as being able to vary their engagement is a developmental perspective in these contexts.

To choose between different social possibilities, to start up new activities and to maintain a game are developmental challenges that simultaneously demand social coordination with others and *personal preferences and structures of relevance*. The children have to sort out and select in the complexity and this selection seems to be important for their development of self-understanding. This point both draws on theoretical concepts from the research of conduct of everyday life (Dreier 2008, Holzkamp

2013) as well as elaborates them in relation to processes of development. Especially in their leisure-time, the children position themselves as e.g. a person who is in the sewing room, someone who loves computer games or someone who is always with friends – they seem to present themselves through their activities and preferences.

Thus, the personal task of developing personal preferences and priorities is closely connected to participation in social communities (and therefore different due to what is at stake in different societal practices). The children are placed in an institution structured in particular ways and with different possibilities, demands and restrictions at stake. Their developmental challenges are *interwoven in social coordination*, negotiations and possibilities for creating something together with someone else.

In this process, the children develop *personal ways* of dealing with the social challenges. This could be to find a close friend to be with, to place themselves strategically in a line, to leave the lunch in time to join the football match with exactly the group of football-boys you want to be part of, or to start up and organise the kind of activities you prefer. It seems important to the children to combine *what* they are doing and *who* they are doing it with. It is a personal challenge to them to find a way into the activities and communities – and to find their own way - to find out what someone like me should choose to do here, to find out what kind of person I can be here. This connects to what you can become part of, where to belong, and to belong together with the friends with whom one can engage in what seems relevant in life.

When these movements and social possibilities seem so fundamental to the children, it is not an isolated question of having fun but is *also* related to their possibilities for conducting their everyday life and developing as a person with personal preferences, priorities and structures of relevance. It is important to address *the social differences* in relation to managing these developmental challenges.

The social life in the institutions for children's leisure-time has different meanings to different children and to the same child at different times. The examples have illustrated *some general challenges in the life of children that we as adults often overlook* and when we do that, we cannot see the general conflictuality as a background for specific dilemmas. As long as it is going in a quite unnoticed way, it is 'just children playing' and when the movements among the children become stuck, we notice it as specific problems related to specific children. When we overlook the social complexity of children's daily life and the ordinary difficulties in relation to organising a child's life, problems appear related to deviant circumstances, often related to an individual child and its background. This means that problems appear in a quite abstract way, formulated in terms of categorizations of threats, risk and deficiencies.

With the insight from these complex social processes and the children's way of developing a conduct

of everyday life together, we will return to the dilemmas of Paul.

‘We can do nothing more for him’

When we consider the transition Paul makes between special school and the after-school centre in the light of how the other children organise their everyday activities across contexts, we obtain important knowledge to help us understand Paul’s personal dilemmas. The other children (Paul’s former class-mates) leave from the school together and share the history of the day. You see children running in small groups, chatting about “what do you want to do?” or “I have made plans with Peter...”. During the movement across the schoolyard from school to the after school centre, the social space is 'rearranged' - from a class community to ‘multiple leisure-time communities’ and the children are very active co-creators of this transition. Making plans *together* - knowing the other children’s engagement and plans - is an important aspect of orientating and taking part in and being able to contribute relevantly to children’s communities.

Also, during the school day, the children are continuously busy negotiating, conflicting about, and arranging what to do and with whom - both during breaks here and now and later in the day. As illustrated, such conflictual processes of arranging social life across different contexts are general challenges in the everyday lives of the children.

It seems that, in many ways, children like Paul are in between or on the threshold in relation to these processes. This situation must be understood in the light of social policy in Denmark emphasising preventive interventions: when adults worry about children’s development, investigations are undertaken of individual developmental disturbances and possible risks and threats (for a parallel see Røn Larsen 2011). This often involves a long wait for a diagnostic report, considerations of various special arrangement and doubts about how long the intervention will last. Are the children going to stay in this class or not? What is the best placement? The children’s belonging is at stake – for themselves and also for the adult and for the other children. The other children talk about Paul being “sent to another school to learn to behave”. Is he someone they can depend on or build a stable relationship with?

Paul’s parents are concerned that he will slip out of the class community. Paul’s mother says: “he gets all the boring stuff at school. He misses out on all the fun stuff that they do together in the class, like that theme on trolls.” Because he spends most hours out of the class, he is not participating in activities arranged for creating a good social milieu in the class. The parents felt pressured to accept the family class solution and since they think Paul has dilemmas in his way of approaching the other children they want interventions in relation to that.

When we follow these children over time there seems to be a movement from struggling hard to find a place in the children's communities, towards withdrawing, joining adult-structured activities and turning away from the after-school centre – wanting to stay at home instead. Both the adults and the other children seem to *give up* along the way, and they end up concluding that Paul does not belong here. And at the end it seems that Paul also thinks so himself. He develops his self-understanding and sense of belonging in relation to his possibilities of participating in and across contexts.

At the end of the school year the professionals in the after-school centre describe that Paul is increasingly “slipping out of” the children's communities - that he has “withdrawn to the wood workshop” and that he often stays at home in the afternoons. The manager states that her experience is that both children and adults have “given up” on him. “We can do nothing more for him. He needs a fresh start in a new place.” There seems to be a dynamic of mutual resignation - where the different parties experience restricted influence and give up on each other.

Thus, the meaning of individual children's specific difficulties is produced in a concrete context and cannot be understood separately from the social dynamic in historical structures. Personal difficulties must be understood as related to social conflicts, dilemmas and contradictions in social practices - as for instance conflicts about the concept of learning and the multifarious perspectives on the aim of the school. Awareness and knowledge about social dynamics in the collaboration of the involved adults and in the children's communities is crucial when intervening in children's lives and organising support for children. The meanings and consequences of professionals' intervention are mediated by the social dynamics of children's communities and vice versa.

Nevertheless, research points to the difficulties for parents and professionals seeking to obtain an insight into the complex social dynamics in the children's communities (Højholt 2012a; Stanek 2011). In general, we need knowledge about how conflicts in the children's communities appear from the children's perspectives and how knowledge about these social dynamics could lead to interventions directly in the general school setting.

Instead, cooperation characterised by worries seem to *turn into conflicts* about responsibility for ‘defects’ and deviances categorised in relation to concepts about universal developmental processes. Developmental psychology has a part to play in these societal conflicts about what and how children should develop, and who is responsible for what. Standards for development have been used to problematize different ways of performing as parents, focusing on threats and risks - and the political preoccupation with overcoming intergenerational transmission of social problems seems to reinforce this.

Observing children's participation in different communities across contexts illustrates that children *manage difference and complexity* in their everyday life, but the conflicts about the differences may

lead to resignation and a process of exclusion. And in relation to this, it is the categorical understandings differentiating between the deviant and the general that appear as threats.

Children developing agency

During their years in the institutions for children's leisure-time, the children change their way of taking part here. We characterise these changes with concepts aimed at pointing to development of participation in relation to concrete challenges and possibilities. In this way, the concept of participation can be differentiated into movements between *involving* oneself and being involved in social communities and their activities; *contributing* to specific social practices and in this way *influencing* the same¹⁹.

When you observe children over time, it is striking how they become familiar with a new social practice and develop a kind of 'grip' in relation to what it is possible to do here, and how to extend their possibilities here. For most of the children, these changes 'open up more and more doors', in both a figurative and literal sense: They know how to act here, not just in the sense of adjusting to the given procedures, but also in the sense of *using* the resources here as a means for changing the very same – to open up possibilities through contribution to this life, influencing one's own everyday life. In continuation of these concepts, it could be formulated that the children develop personal agency through increasing their common influence on specific conditions (Holzkamp 2013). In such processes, the children may develop a kind of self-understanding in relation to being a person exercising influence through collaboration with others.

In relation to children, the tradition is to focus on what they need to learn in order to adapt, and to confuse a child's position, characterised by quite limited conditions for influence, with a determined child subject. With such an approach, we overlook the importance of giving the children *experiences of being influential*. We will argue for linking development to possibilities to take part in the changes of the social practice of which one is a part (see also Lave 2011). Personal development is not just a question of developing *through* social communities, but also a question of development *of* social communities. And in these processes, the personal engagements of the children develop as well. This is a parallel to a Hedegaard (e.g. 2012) elaboration on the concept of motives in a cultural historical approach. We will emphasise the situated conflicts in the social practice, the personal conflicts in relation to a plurality of engagements and the dialectical connection between development of

¹⁹ A parallel can be found in Haavind, 1987, emphasising extended responsibility, reciprocity and extension of motivation and in Stetsenko, 2008, accentuating the concept of contribution and relating it to social change. We have discussed this in Højholt 2011)

engagements in concrete matters and conditions for influencing the same. A central point in relation to this is the possibilities for contributing. Still, the *meanings of contributions* are mediated through how other participants connect to them and use them for further collective collaboration and common activity, and in relation to this the children are positioned very differently.

Concluding remarks

A question was raised in the introduction: If we leave ideas about universal development, will we still be able to evaluate and take a standpoint in relation to developmental conditions? We find that the example illustrates that it is possible to evaluate children's developmental possibilities in a concrete and situated way: Paul's conditions for taking part are problematic. But instead of conflicting about the right developmental perspectives and the right parental upbringing, *the relationship* between a child and its conditions should be investigated. This includes what the child seems to be occupied with, what the child is trying to develop his or her influence in relation to, and what the child tries to manage. These considerations point towards a decentring of our developmental concepts. Through the examples of the children's coordination, we aimed to illustrate that children are developing their personal conduct of life – and this development has a social and cross-contextual basis. It can be difficult to support children without situated knowledge about their concrete situations and possibilities for dealing with these developmental tasks. Furthermore the example of Paul's dilemmas illustrates how children's developmental processes cannot be understood isolated from social conflicts about them.

Returning to the discussion about abstract developmental concepts, it could be concluded that universal concepts about development seem to *displace* a concern for children's development and well-being, turning attention towards individual categorisation. But to give up on a concept of development may lose an opportunity to explore what seems relevant to the children and their conduct of everyday life. A concept of development could link social possibilities to personal processes and points to a democratic perspective of the ongoing changes of social practice.

Such developmental perspectives point to a pedagogical task in relation to working with the cooperation between the adults involved in children's lives, as well as with the communities of children across contexts. Instead of contributing to the powerlessness and abandonment – Paul gives up on finding friends - we must give the children experiences of *contributing* to the communities, *influencing* them and *developing influence* in relation to their social possibilities. These are concepts connected to investigating the relationship between a person and a person's possibilities, and in this relationship we should work for development.

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Towards a posthuman developmental psychology of child, families and communities

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This chapter elaborates a rationale for posthuman approaches to early childhood education and development, albeit with some reservations. It traces how discussions of the posthuman build on critical theory and deconstructionist analyses of the limits of liberal bourgeois humanism. Such analyses have had considerable impact in psychology, since the liberal humanist subject clearly informs – in overt and covert ways – much modern developmental and educational theory and practice. As we shall see, a complicating factor is that – like its predecessor ‘poststructuralism’ (for example) – perspectives labelled as ‘posthuman’ vary and are not necessarily entirely convergent, since they are drawn from different disciplines and fields of practice. There are also considerable continuities and overlaps with previous critical frameworks, as well as newly emerging foci. Nevertheless feminist, postcolonial and queer engagements with posthuman debates, in particular, provoke relevant re-evaluation of existing models and, beyond this, pose different research questions for early childhood education and development researchers. Taking in turn the key terms, ‘child’, ‘families’ and ‘communities’, that comprise the theme of this Section of the book, the chapter indicates how frameworks associated with the posthuman reformulate each of these terms and their relationships with each other, and also generate new conceptual and methodological agendas.

Key figures in childhood studies have recently hailed Vygotskian approaches as the exception to the otherwise problematic status of developmental psychology (in its dominant reception) as wedded to a deficit and individualist model (see e.g. Thorne, 2007). This may well be so, especially in more recent readings of Vygotsky’s work that draw attention to his interest in emotions and personality (Gonzalez Rey, 2011), and this approach has been taken up in a variety of directions in other chapters in this Handbook. Such work challenges the individual-social binary that underlies the individualism of current models, and attention to specific contexts of and for interaction has revised previous understandings that portrayed individual mental activity as prior to and separate from specific cultural and historical environments. Hence this is one approach to reworking the subject-environment re-articulation.

My focus here is to indicate how posthuman analyses might inform the current disciplinary and ethical challenges we face as theoreticians and practitioners in developmental psychology and education. Situating this within current contexts, it seems we are in sore need of critical resources. Increasing

public/policy appeals to particular disciplinary knowledges work alongside changing relationships to the national and international state bodies to politicise psychological and educational knowledges in particularly acute ways. For example, in my national context, Britain, school achievement is increasingly evaluated (in ever narrower terms) by the state while schools are pressurised into becoming private business-making ventures. The new illusions of individual freedoms/autonomies under neoliberalism threaten to return more power/authority to the already privileged upper middle classes, as inequalities between rich and poor widen ever more, regionally and internationally.

A key ethical challenge we face is surely how to resist the drive towards psychologisation (or the explanation of socio-political issues within exclusively individualist psychological terms) within social and policy discourse, as so often occurs in relation to parent-blaming. For example, in early 2012 the main UK academic research funder, the Economic and Social Research Council published a briefing on 'education and social mobility' in which it claimed 'The adverse attitudes to education of disadvantaged mothers are one of the most important factors associated with the lower educational attainment of their children...' (ESRC Social Mobility briefings <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/evidence-briefings/index.aspx> page 2). Such claims rearticulate familiar classed and misogynist strategies of blaming the poor for their poverty without even admitting into the domain of explanation how and why disadvantage is communicated via women as mothers (rather than say school practices or other partners or agencies), including crucially how and why they have come to be disadvantaged, and the role of the state in supporting or countering such dynamics. In other words, the abstraction and reification that creeps in so easily around 'children' and 'families' can work to pin societal processes of marginalisation and exclusion onto individuals. These can then be treated as individual problems or responsibilities, much as (in the UK) the new term 'worklessness' has emerged to characterise unemployment as a condition of individuals instead of a structural or political context. In particular, posthuman analyses, allied with the so-called 'new materialist feminisms' may help to challenge some of the spuriously scientific claims associated with the neuropsychological turn (De Vos, 2012; 2014).

What's wrong with humanism?

Humanist conceptions of the psychological subject are closely aligned with the modern Western Enlightenment, and associated models of development are complicit with modernity's exclusions and oppressions. It is now widely accepted that such psychological models are heir to, and in turn reinscribe, the economic and cultural privileges arising from capitalist exploitation and European colonialism – whether in terms of theories of family organisation or cultural practices in child-rearing

(Buck Morss, 1975; Broughton, 1987; Boyden, 1990). Theories of early education suffer from similar problems in terms of how their conceptions of development reduce dominant economic developmental models to the individual – whether in terms of starting points (the state from which development takes place), contexts (the states or environments in which development occurs), processes (agents of development) and endpoints (goals, outcomes or achievements). Hence Cannella and Viruru (2004), for example, see clear parallels between approaches to childhood and colonization.

At issue is not only that these assumptions enter into sets of professional and policy models but also how they work to classify and regulate modes of professional and popular subjectivities, including those of families and children. The model of the child as unit of development in mainstream psychology is portrayed as singular and abstracted (that is, it is already presumed to be *outside* social relations). Portrayal of parental figures quickly resolve into the mother or other singular caregiver) as mere representative of, or more often uninterrogated microcosm of, the social/societal relations. Not only is this a reduced way of configuring sociocultural relations, but this then accords disproportionate responsibility to a poorly conceptualised and contextually-situated socio-educational agent. Mothers and other caregivers therefore come in for much negative scrutiny and evaluation in developmental theory, as do teachers when the gaze moves into formal educational arenas, instead of connecting parenting and familial practices with analysis of the wider sociohistorical and cultural institutional practices and constraints that surround them.

Recent social theory has offered critical approaches to children, families and communities in early childhood education. Such critiques are now acquiring a sense of urgency. For if the romantic humanist model of the subject is the bourgeois, culturally masculine (but presumed asexual), Euro-US child, its trajectory of development has recapitulated that of the western modern industrialisation – rational, technical, detached; alienated and abstracted, and heading very fast towards destruction, or at best crises of unsustainability. Rather than merely repeat now well-recognised critiques of models of human and individual development (Henriques *et al.*, 1984), as inscribed within dominant approaches to early childhood education and development (MacNaughton, 2005; MacNaughton *et al.*, 2007; Hultqvist and Dahlberg, 2001), the challenge addressed by this chapter is to consider *alternatives* to humanist models.

A critical posthumanism

However before moving on to describe posthumanism, I will first address misgivings readers may legitimately be harbouring. Humanist approaches to subjectivity have, after all, been hard fought for,

and scarcely (if at all) won. Decentring the human subject from models of development and education poses significant challenges for early childhood education and development, not least because many children (like other subjugated or 'minoritised' groups such as women, colonised peoples and gay men, lesbians and transgendered people) have not yet been accorded subject status. Debates remain focused on the recognition of identities and corresponding rights-based claims are still high on political agendas.ⁱ Yet such humanist, rights-based claims can also work to confirm and reify identities that should be considered transient positions (albeit no less legitimate for this, of course). They install a structure of hailing and recognition of identification that – whether humanist or technocratic – presumes modern rationality, along with such limitations as presuming full access to consciousness, and so offering a fixed and closed, rather than relational, model of the subject, rather than one composed of shifting configurations that are intersecting and mutually transformative.

Instead of merely repeating these well-known problems with humanist models, other conceptual and methodological currents are grappling with alternative ways of dealing with problems of teleology and abstraction in conceptions of human development, and attempting to formulate social subjectivities.ⁱⁱ Clearly key questions surround the desirability of transcending all aspects of the modern, rather than perhaps re-assessing them in the light of diverse modernizing processes as they have occurred outside the metropolitan north (Hayami *et al.*, 2003; Chatterjee, 1997). De-coupling 'modern' from 'western' (or what is otherwise sometimes called the 'global north') opens up some manoeuvring space, or attention to cultural-historical contexts of practice, from and in which early childhood takes place.

Beyond deconstruction or critical theory (Broughton, 1987; Burman and Maclure, 2011), contemporary discussions of 'the posthuman', diverse as they are, elaborate ways of destabilising the humanist subject from its privileged place within models of social practice. They draw on the history of science (Haraway, 1989), science and technology studies (Latour, 1991), sociocultural theory (Newman and Holzman, 1993) and actor network theory (Fenwick and Edwards, 2012). There are also key contributions from and engagements between feminist, postcolonial and queer theory. Like postcolonial theory, posthuman debates do not presume the historical supercession of humanism (which would then reinstate a progressivist narrative), but rather generate conceptualisations that offer alternative conceptions and even prospects that go beyond the limits of current humanist perspectives. Most particularly, they elaborate practical challenges to the isolationism, as well as the cultural particularity, of prevailing models of human development that masquerade as universal through their inscription in culturally dominant approaches (Boyden, 1990).

It should be acknowledged that the resources comprising the broad set of debates informing 'the posthuman' are not only diverse but are in mutual tension. This can make for some difficulties in trying to arrive at a clear sense of what posthumanism is, or rather *which* posthumanism each is promulgating. Nevertheless such critical debate works to undermine any pretensions to complete or triumphal analysis. As Braidotti (2013: 90) notes: 'A posthuman notion of the enfleshed and extended relational self keeps the techno-hype in check by a sustainable ethics of transformation. This sober position pleads for resistance to both the fatal attraction of nostalgia and the fantasy of transhumanist and other techno-utopias.'

In the rest of this chapter, I explore what posthumanist critiques bring to reconceptualisations of children, childhood, families and communities and their relations to early childhood education.

'Child'

The child has functioned both as the anchor for humanist models of subjectivity under modernity, and its nostalgic guarantor of the unalienated part of ourselves we have (supposedly) lost. Sentimentalized images of children and childhood populate not only our screens but also our imaginations, aligned with notions of inner, or even authentic, selfhood. Such cultural 'baggage' is unhelpful for many children whose childhoods do not correspond to such idealized images, who correspondingly suffer the stigmatization and pathologization of being failing or deficient children, as subjects of 'stolen childhoods', as well as for the adults who feel robbed of the childhood they once (might have) had. But the value and meanings accorded children and childhood have a cultural and political history that has been traced and critiqued (see e.g. Steedman, 1995; Shuttleworth, 2010). Steedman shows how ideas emerging across modernizing Europe came to be constellated around the child. Ideas from cell theory in biology, alongside ideas that would generate psychoanalysis, inscribed romantic humanism with a sense of embodied history focused on the body and mind of the child, especially – as Steedman highlights – the feminised young child, portrayed as innocent and vulnerable (so articulating and reinscribing the convergence of gendered and childhood ideologies). The past – of culture, society, even the species – became something that was 'turned inside' via the story of the child. Once rendered as an 'internal' matter the social, political, economic and institutional all fade into insignificance, ushering in domains of explanation and intervention limited by this narrow focus. Hence the 'child' has long been a key focus for critics of humanism (e.g. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1992).

Historical and anthropological research offer vital indications of how understandings, and experiences of, childhood vary according to historical moment and cultural location, and even throw into ques-

tion its categorisations as well as contents. Such work also connects with specific socio-political contests and agendas surrounding childhood and models of learning that accompanied the introduction of compulsory schooling, occurring across Europe in the 1870s. Much work (e.g. Rose, 1985) has indicated the complex and contradictory concerns that gave rise to this measure - combining opposition to child exploitation in hazardous working conditions with social order concerns posed by an economically active and politically engaged and dissatisfied sector of the population (Hoyles, 1989). The 'schooled child' placed children within an educational field that positioned them as learners rather than knowers, and so de-legitimated the socio-political knowledge of working young people (Hendrick, 1990). Such issues remain relevant to educational provision for street connected children to this day (Chahal, in press; Corcoran, in press). Similarly, Katz (2004) suggests how globalization restructures forms of childhood and their community and work practices, so connecting questions of neoliberalisation in education (e.g. Fendler, 2001) with wider debates on migration and sustainability.

From the posthuman repertoire other perspectives emerge. While deconstructionist approaches and the textual-linguistic 'turn' shifted the focus from time to space, history to geography, identity to context, and individual to group, the preoccupation within posthuman studies is to explore further the move from a singular, bounded individual to multiple, mobile collective subjectivities. This goes further than Moss and Petrie's (2002) call for a move from children's services to children's spaces, for example (where the focus moves from defining what children 'are' and what they 'need', to attending to and providing socio-educational contexts in which they can act and interact). Taking seriously how subjectivity crosses bodies and minds offers additional approaches to conceptualising and engaging with children. This includes challenging the privilege accorded rationality, and so one key posthuman move has been to attend to and explore affect, as a necessary corollary of embodiment. It also means unhinging the child from the origin point of any development story, singular or general, and instead challenging the temporal hierarchies such models involve, including those that treat what comes earlier as more influential than later experiences or events on particular outcomes. This anti-historicism does not deny history but rather attends to the claims made for such historical continuities or causalities, inviting critical evaluation.

As a key example, instead of 'growing up', as we assume children will or should do, queer theory critically interrogates the normalizations inscribed in such trajectories, inviting exploration of alternative pathways such as 'growing sideways' (Stockton, 2009). Such perspectives are especially useful to challenge presumed ideas about 'progress' that are read back onto and into child development, but they also bear upon current moves to address some of these criticisms from within developmental

psychology such as discussions of 'developmental cascades' (which allow for multiplicity but still privilege earlier over later influences) and of course incite very different approaches to claims focused on neuroscience, brain morphology or physiology.

Humanist models have relied heavily on a presumption of a clearcut demarcation between human and animal (usually premised upon claims to language as a specifically human activity and achievement). Even radical humanist approaches, such as that of Freire (1972), made much of this distinction and various feminist postcolonial commentators have traced how discourses of European superiority were founded on such demarcations (Seshadri, 2012). The young child has long been a source of fascination in this regard, portrayed as bridging nature and culture, with culture figured as the entry into language. But what this presumes is that nature is separated from, and even prior to, culture - an assumption that is increasingly questioned in this (post-natural) world. Man (or hu-man)-made interventions have come to deeply shape apparently natural entities such as climate or landscape, and so 'nature' cannot be divorced from 'culture', nor humankind from animal and other kinds, since we share the same planetary predicament.

Hence a key feature of posthumanist analyses is that they pressurise the human/non-human relation to attend to entanglements and complexities of human, animal, nature and environment. Indeed 'trans' appears as a ubiquitous term - transnational, transpecies, transversal and of course transgender. While the work done by, within and across 'trans' still demands further explication, it certainly delineates a shift of focus away from dichotomies and polarisations to connections and relations. Further, as Haraway (2003) notes in both her *Companion Species Manifesto* and earlier work on the 'oncomouse' (Haraway, 1997) (the genetically engineered mouse created specifically for experimental research), acknowledging such complexity does not imply equal or symmetrical relations but rather mutual relations and dependencies. These unequal interdependencies offer insights for models of mutual engagement and co-habitation, even as humans exercise greater control over animals and territories. An indicative application of posthuman ideas, specifically as formulated by Haraway, to early education is offered by Taylor (2013), who deconstructs the association between child and nature via a critical history of early educationalists' philosophical commitments (she discusses Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori), so shaping the emphasis on nature work in kindergarten curricula. Just as Strathern (1992) shows how national identities are forged and maintained through particular conceptions of the organisation of nature (whether as gardens or agricultural cultivation or less 'benign' uses) as well as buildings, so Taylor highlights how particular gendered and cultural hierarchies are elaborated through this constructed notion of nature. Taylor moves on to offer a series of worked

examples of how else human-animal relations might be reconfigured, specifically through reflecting on dilemmas and prefigurative examples arising from classroom and domestic practices.

A further feature of posthuman analysis is that it embraces technology. This is in dramatic contrast to most humanist approaches that decry the machinic as dystopian and destructive of distinctive human characteristics. Here Haraway's earlier (1985) discussion of the cyborg has been a key influence for feminist and postcolonial approaches. Haraway portrays the cyborg as potentiallyⁱⁱⁱ offering a model of subjectivity that is not structured according to the traditional gender binary (male/female), nor tied by history or embodied affective relations (though perhaps even these assumptions will come to be questioned as machines gain sufficient complexity to - seem to - be sentient). The increasing human use of information technologies (for commercial, medical, or recreational purposes) has transformed understandings of and horizons for knowing and being, making material ideas of distributed networks of connection that cross bodies and transgress traditional mental/material binaries.

In relation to childhood, such technological developments have radically transformed some of its key tenets. Reproduction can now be technologically assisted, or terminated. The bearing and giving birth to children has not only become medicalized (as feminists have long noted, Martin, 2001), but increasingly testing during pregnancy and genetic screening make some fetuses/babies less likely to be born. The abuse of such technologies for the selective termination of girl babies is well documented (Arditti, *et al.*, 1989), with far-reaching national and global consequences that Malouf (1995) attempted to envisage. As well as posing many more ethical-political dilemmas in relation to gender and disability rights, such questions also impose new questions around the relationship between ownership of the body and (women's) labour - as in surrogacy.

Hence far from only entering into conception and birthing issues, increasingly technologized children and childhoods generate much popular concern and debate. Some of this occurs in relation to children's use of technology, their 'vulnerability' to abuse through the internet (cyberbullying, grooming or stalking etc.), others - reinstating romantic nostalgic themes - can be seen in the criticisms over children leading increasing sedentary lifestyles and not playing outside, a feature that also arises through increasing child protection considerations, which have helped to produce the segregation of children from other sites of social production in industrialised contexts. Finally, there are hints that children, as a new generation growing up with advanced new technologies as their assumed culture, are taking over as the experts in a way that inspires some fear as well as envy (see also Burman, 2011; 2013).

Hence multiple and ambivalent cultural anxieties are mobilised in re-workings of culture and nature symbolized by children and childhood. The posthuman perspective invites us to go beyond such 'additive' models of, for example, supplementing existing educational practices with new technology (as in 'ICT for schools' initiatives), to envisage more messy and intertwined connections between humans, animals and technology that unsettle some of the perceived constants that have constellated around early childhood education. These constants, or assumptions, are focused not only around notions of gender, or sexuality, for example, but extend also to reconsideration of environments or landscapes of learning and interaction that necessarily transform models of competence, assessment and pedagogy.

'Families'

Models of the family have long been a site of investigation and critique in developmental psychology and early education. While traditional sociological approaches largely adopted functionalist frameworks, thereby reducing and adapting household practices to economics, psychology has addressed families as the primary arena for the care and upbringing of children - often primarily figured in relation to social policy agendas. Hence the re-inscription of the binary between the social and the individual is re-enacted not only via disciplinary demarcations but also through legal and social policy distinctions made between what is presumed to be public or private. While Marxist analyses highlighted the family as vital to the state for its reproductive labour - in the sense of maintaining and servicing workers and reproducing new generations of workers, feminists have challenged the gendered division of labour inside *and* outside the home, including how the reproduction of that division, and the extension of its accorded status outside the home, is responsible for the low value, and corresponding low pay, accorded care work. This remains the case even where – under neoliberalism – emotional labour is increasingly demanded from all workers. Thus intersections of longstanding patriarchal relations with the creative and intensifying strategies of capitalism produce specific sites of regulation and evaluation of household positions, and in which psychological expertise has increasingly been drawn upon as arbiter.

Critiques of discourses of the family are of course longstanding (see Poster, 1978). These emphasised how the rise of the bourgeois nuclear family naturalized the gendered division of labour, and the role of the state in policing and normalizing family functioning, including naturalizing the emotional and physical labour of women. Black feminists also challenged the restricted model of the family addressed by social theory as well as representations of the family as only oppressive, citing how it can also protect against the insults of structural and institutional racism (e.g. Carby, 1987).

These limitations in conceptualizations of the family have far-reaching consequences. Feminist post-colonial analyses have highlighted how the rise of the ideology of the nuclear family, in the wake of the emerging impacts of Darwinian ideas, provided not only the model for but *also a rationale for*, colonialism. Women and children under the rule of the husband/father constituted a structure of naturalized inequality ('hierarchy within unity') that was applied outside the family, in particular to colonial contexts, to render them as less developed or immature, and so confirm the 'underdevelopment' of those peoples upon whom rule was then sanctioned to be imposed. As McClintock (1995: 45) noted:

Projecting the family image onto national and imperial progress enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree. Imperial intervention could thus be configured as a linear, nonrevolutionary progression that naturally contained hierarchy within unity: paternal fathers ruling benignly over immature children.

Hence critical and feminist psychologists have challenged the positions and identities produced for parents and children (and the disproportionate emphasis on mothers) via familialist discourses (Arendell, 2000; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991), just as their sociological counterparts documented diverse varieties of family and household practices that transgress and transcend the models populating textbooks (Gittins, 1985). Childhood offers a key link between material and so-called immaterial labour as structured within a classed conception of the family. As Lesnik-Oberstein (1998: 7) put it: 'the very idea of childhood itself is crucially implicated in the structures of feeling that define the bourgeois nuclear family, and which prioritize emotions as a structuring and motivating force for both public and private life in contemporary capitalism.' These 'structures of feeling' (Williams, 1977) have been both presumed (naturalised) and then evaluated (assessed) by psychological theories and practices that precisely demonstrate the ideological and mutable character of the public-private binary.

Typologies of parenting styles elaborated within psychology (as authoritarian, permissive or authoritative, e.g. Baumrind, 1971) hark back to post World War II discussions of building democratic societies (informed by Adorno *et al.*'s, 1961, model of 'the authoritarian personality' as produced through family, though interestingly specifically father-son, relations). Such models inscribed schooling and so-called progressive or child-centred education, although the gaps in interpretation and practice have been widely documented (see e.g. Sharp and Green, 1975; Walkerdine, 1984 and for a recent analysis outside the global north, Sriprakash, 2012). Despite being published nearly 25 years ago, Walkerdine and Lucey (1989)'s analysis of how child-centred educational approaches are applied to

mothers' negotiations with their children, importing the pedagogical imperative from school to home, remain increasingly relevant - including the affective intensifications noted by Lesnik-Oberstein (1998), and the drive towards instrumentalization and optimization of individual human capacities highlighted by Foucauldian analyses (e.g. Rose, 1989; 1990). Everyday marketing now routinely mobilises developmental psychological discourse to incite a maximization of development opportunities for children, simultaneously confirming appropriate maternal identities (see e.g. Burman, 2010; 2013). As state cutbacks in health and welfare provision gather pace, amid neoliberal policies that use conditions of recession and 'austerity' to further the promotion of marketisation and globalization, measures are being introduced to 'activate' and 'responsibilize' parents and children, with the 'burden' of caring increasingly located within a restrictively defined family household and activation entering into the very earliest schooling (Ailwood, 2008).

It should be clear that it is important not to overstate the distinction between posthuman and other critical approaches. In relation to critiques of familial models in psychology, there is a large and longstanding body of critical research that has both documented diversity of family forms and analysed the consequences of failing to represent these within psychological and social theories, and policies. Of these, perhaps Phoenix's (1987) discussion of the ways young black mothers feature in psychological accounts only as problematic is particularly noteworthy. The dynamic of normalized absence/pathologised presence she identified - that is, of only being represented when stigmatised and disappearing from attention when non-problematic, has been taken up more widely to address general dynamics of the ways gender and culturally minoritised positions intersect (see e.g. Burman and Chantler, 2005). Intersectionality theory is perhaps one of the key crossover frameworks between feminist (particularly black feminist) and posthuman analyses (Phoenix and Prattynama, 2006; Cho *et al.*, 2013).

The emergence of cultural psychology has also brought attention to anthropological research documenting varieties of family and kinship systems across and within cultures. A first step was to attend to cultural differences in norms of caregiving practices produced through different family and household organisations, such as joint families (e.g. Kurtz, 1992). But this move ran the risk of reinstalling particular static, reified conceptions in the name of cultural authenticity. More recent work has engaged with the changing structure and functioning of families and households as they struggle to cope with, and indeed often creatively adapt to, changing economic conditions that distribute caring and familial responsibilities across great distances, often transnationally. Familial forms can then be understood alongside the political and economic forces that shaped them, but also in relation to how changes in the structuring of labour have produced a 'global care chain' (Hochschild, 2000) such that

poor women from poor countries are paid by richer women in rich countries to care for their children, while the poorer women's children are cared for by grandparents or other - often female - family members.

Moreover, just as intra-national and transnational labour migration become increasingly normalised, this has transformed understandings of family as well as labour relations - so showing their mutual constitution. A further set of analyses has documented how economic pressure shapes even the most intimate and earliest of caregiving activities. Gottlieb's (2014) account from the Cote D'Ivoire of Beng practices of feeding and washing babies suggests how activities that could be understood as violent intrusions work in the service of maintaining their mothers' agricultural labouring capacities. This puts into a rather different context debates circulating from the global north about breastfeeding and its class structuring (Newson and Newson, 1973) - despite and amid claims that 'breast is best'. In terms of the intensification of labour for survival in contexts of accelerating global poverty inequalities, Nieuwenhuys (2007) has coined the term the 'global womb' to describe the 'hidden' work of women and (both boy and girl) children as the last resource being mobilised by and in response to capitalist superexploitation. A more familiar example in the global north - which also pertains to the global south - is how, contrary to prevailing images of the family in which children are cared for rather than providing care (surely a massively false opposition), many children across the world are carers for their families, either through parental disability, dislocation or death (Widmer *et al.*, 2013). Thus gendered and generational positions are mediated by class and economic privilege, and the boundaries around family forms and functioning are shown to be increasingly permeable according to the whims and appetite of capitalism.

While such cultural analyses have certainly destabilised prevailing understandings of both children and their parents, as well as how and where they live, perhaps queer theory has done the most to challenge models of the family. This goes beyond earlier work (e.g. Tasker, 2004; Tasker and Golombok, 1997) warding off the pathologisation of gay men and lesbians as parents by documenting how their children can be as happy and well-adjusted as children growing up with parents in a heterosexual relationship. Useful as this was, as Anderssen (2001) pointed out, it maintains the prevailing orientation around a heteronormative model by focusing on how gay and lesbian families can be 'as good as' heterosexual ones. Beyond this kind of compensatory approach (which maintains heterosexual privilege), other challenges have emerged. In particular, within the posthuman frame, Edelman's (2004) book *No future* takes issue with the ways the child is (under prevailing conditions of conception and reproduction) the distinctive and definitive outcome of a heterosexual coupling. He critiques the way the child figures culturally as a significant guarantor of heterosexuality around

which not only is the heteronormative family constellated but, linked to and through this, wider institutional and structural practices are confirmed. Edelman develops this analysis to indicate far-reaching connections between the figure of the child as signifier of continuity and futurity and wider societal notions of teleology. Hence national, international and even planetary progress figure as driven by and supporting heteronormativity. Edelman's analysis may be limited by insufficient attention to the specifically gendered discourses around parenting roles and indeed parenthood (see Lensnik-Oberstein, 2010; Caselli, 2010). Nevertheless his analysis highlights interpretive vistas opened up by highlighting the ways family forms implicate, and are implicated within, restrictive and coercive discourses of (hetero)sexed/gender relations.

If queer theory has questioned what is presumed to be natural, and critiques the child as the site of heteronormative social reproduction, developments in reproductive technology prompt further posthuman and postnatural analyses (including precisely those that have been used by gay and lesbian parents - such as donor insemination, surrogacy and *in vitro* fertilisation). Taking developments in reproductive technologies as a starting point, Strathern's (1992) influential *After Nature* provides a rather different set of reflections and resources that inform posthuman debates. Indeed she and Haraway write in a cycle of mutual influence, so that in this early text she draws on Haraway's (1985) 'cyborg manifesto'. Strathern traces the transformation of the notion of 'kin' from its earlier anthropological use to describe cultural networks and hierarchies, to become - after and via interpretations of Darwinian evolutionary theory - something that is increasingly treated as a matter of biological, rather than social, relationship. On a methodological and analytical note, Strathern specifies her claims as relating to the retrospective accounting procedures of British anthropologists of the mid twentieth century. Such qualifications turn out to have significance, not only in relation to the particular contributions of British anthropologists to theories of kinship but also precisely in relation to the question of (smaller) family size that, it has been claimed, gave rise to the earlier emergence of and value accorded notions of individuality in England. Unlike Macfarlane (1983), whose work she draws upon, rather than treating this as part of a progressivist narrative, Strathern leaves open the question of historical facticity to read such accounts (in Foucauldian terms) as histories of the present; that is, as relating to preoccupations of the contemporary moment - somewhat playfully leaving open whether she sees these as explanatory factors for, or rather as symptoms of, these. A key argument running through this rich and allusive text is that the postevolutionary discursive shift from social to biological kinship paradoxically evacuates the notion of 'kin' of its social dimensions. Not only does the individual emerge stripped of its social constitution, but notions of nature come to be understood as outside the social in a way that ultimately de-socialises the individual itself.

Strathern offers an account of the separation of nature from the social that constitutes the preconditions for the genetic developmentalism that Edelman problematises, with all its heteronormative and other (class, cultural, differently-abled, gendered) exclusions. Moreover her analysis addresses the relevance of such notions within the rising culture of individualism and individualisation that formed the cultural-temporal backcloth to her analysis - Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s - to provide an analysis that is strikingly prescient of current twenty-first century posthuman discussions. In relation to families, as she also notes, the postevolutionary discourse that privileges biological notions is now combining with an economic climate of cutbacks to welfare support such that people are increasingly expected to look for and find support from their families - however defined, but with an agenda of de-responsibilizing the state and wider social relations in favour of smaller, local, 'personal' networks of support and care. And so we see how mutual citations and presumptions work to confirm existing social conditions and oppressions, but also how posthuman critiques can unravel these and show different possibilities.

Finally, discussions of the posthuman not only critique prevailing exclusionary and restrictive definitions but, taking up the reworking (or queering) of human-animal and technology relations, they suggest how other sets of relationships could be acknowledged and mobilised. This invites a redrawing of kinship relations, not only across non-biologically connected individuals and groups, but also across species. It is no accident that stories of savage children and wolf boys became sources of cultural fascination from the mid nineteenth century (see Chen, 2012; Seshadri, 2012). A key text here is Haraway's (2003) 'Companion species manifesto', a highly influential successor to her 1985 'Cyborg Manifesto', which takes the practice of dogtraining to illuminate complexities, mutual and reciprocal (but not equal) relations between humankind and animalkind. She addresses the pleasures, frustrations and jointly agentic productions of such interactions in a way that starts from, but goes way beyond, conventional humanist anthropomorphic and possessive notions of 'pets' or animal companions. This is not merely an account of how 'pets are family members too' - although such may also be true. Rather, from this close study, broader issues of human-animal connectedness and responsibility emerge, that Haraway and others (such as Braidotti, 2013, who takes this up via a Deleuzian framework) elaborates to envisage a sense and set of commonworlds that critique prevailing capitalist and humanist models of ownership and superiority in favour of a shared common destiny. Thus from the detail of the pedagogical (and so social technological) patterning of activity with her dog, a different framework for relating across prevailing definitions of family emerges - not 'the family' of 'man' or even 'humankind', but of shared animal living in a increasingly pressurised ecological context that urgently requires human reparative attention.

'Communities'

Conventionally, 'communities' are much less discoursed in developmental psychology than are notions of 'child' and 'family' (and so it is particularly commendable they figure within this Volume). Arguably, the reason for this arises precisely through the ways the term 'families' has functioned as the proxy for the social in developmental psychology, to the detriment of indicating its social, structural and cultural determinants. Interestingly, community psychology is not often connected to developmental psychology discussions. This is a significant omission since the radical community social psychologies of Latin America, for example, offer profoundly different models for social-political practice (Montero, 2002). In my own (UK, European) context there is much celebration of the notion of 'community' (usually discoursed as singular), that is typically formulated in relation to nostalgic regrets over its (supposed) demise. By this account, the 'loss of a sense of community' is associated with the rise of individualism, and corresponding egotism and lack of sense of shared cohabitation and responsibility. In this regard, Strathern's account of how the rise of the individual occludes the conditions for its own existence, that is, the social, is particularly relevant to claims of the disappearance of 'community':

Individuality signals choice: it would also seem that it is up to the individual whether to adhere to convention. Choice becomes conventional, and conventions are for choosing. It then becomes redundant to externalise other domains, or even think of social relationships as an object of or context for people's communication with one another. This explains why the active citizen can be relied upon to behave responsibly in her or himself; why the New Right can talk in the same breath of the duties of the citizen and the freedom of the individual without any intervening image of a community. (Strathern, 1992 p.15)

Having supposedly disappeared, politicians attempt to reinvent 'community', although this now occurs within specific political parameters of neoliberalism elaborated with an agenda to devolve responsibility for provision and support from the state to civil society. Indeed the key feature of the British Conservative electoral platform leading up to its 2010 victory (to form a coalition government) was its call for a 'Big Society' as a means to re-generate social engagement. Indicators of this were seen in recent tropes of British policy eliding dynamics of social deprivation with family functioning, such as 'Broken Britain', 'Feral underclass' (in the wake of the 2011 riots), and 'Lost generation' (in relation to escalating youth unemployment and vistas of downward mobility even among graduates). But, as various commentators have pointed out, and as is strikingly reminiscent of Strathern's analysis, it would seem that this Society (Big or not) has - precisely through such policies

- been so emptied of its contents that there is little left inside. Rather, it is an empty society, without complex large institutions (and cities), composed of active but flexible subjects in supposedly small, friendly, local associations. 'Communities' by this account, then, are supposed to be benign, supportive, and culturally homogeneous – a far cry from the complex, multi-ethnic contiguities of most cities.

As a state-level correlate of the ways child, families and communities are engaged with, it is worth noting that in the current UK administration, Children and Families are dealt with in one Ministry, while Communities are in another. What this highlights is how the term 'communities' (in the plural) in a UK political context, currently designates *minoritised* communities - in a manner reminiscent of the ways 'ethnicity' is often discussed as an attribute only of *minority* ethnic groups. This discourse not only maintains a dynamic of 'othering' but also occludes the *relational* process by which this is produced (by the *majority* ethnic group). Moreover the term's political career has moved from a focus on 'community relations', that is, with social order and disorder especially in relation to policing and social stigmatisation (also largely associated with minority communities), to now being allied with social and community 'cohesion' (or security) agendas. This securitisation discourse links local with national and transnational concerns, such that it is preoccupied with identifying 'vulnerable' individuals deemed at risk of exploitation (for example by radical islamisation) in order to prevent terrorism. (See McLaughlin, 2012, and Furedi, 2008, for analyses of how the discourse of vulnerability both mobilises and is supported by those surrounding children and families.) Hence 'communities' is a far from innocent term.

Furthermore, prevailing discussions of 'communities' tend towards a static emphasis and incite an abstraction and reification of practice (that makes reference to 'culture' all the more problematic). Antiracist feminist analyses (e.g. Gupta, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 1998; Anthias, 2008) have long critiqued the image of minority cultural communities as stable, homogeneous and benign, showing how they are divided by class, gender, age and sometimes religious differences. Both critiquing and going beyond the arguments offered by queer theory, they have also challenged the ways women have been seen to represent cultural identification, via their association with the bearing and caring of children, as designating general heterosexed and gendered dynamics that is disproportionately associated with minority communities. Thus far from being separate from community and societal relations, gendered roles and positions, including the evaluation and regulation of women's behaviour, are articulated through and in relation to discourses of both cultural-religious and national belonging.^{iv} Beyond these discussions, even in that now rather outdated understanding of 'community' (as a geographical-

ly-delineated neighbourhood), indicative studies suggest that - contrary to many people's preconceptions - matters of cultural diversity or homogeneity are largely a function of class position, rather than ethnicity, in the sense that working class communities have always been much more culturally diverse and mixed than middle class ones as a reflection of the intersection between racialisation and economic position. Acknowledging such mutually constitutive and intersecting relationships is vital for the elaboration of better theories and practices around children and families - whether from minoritized or majoritized contexts - as various studies domestic abuse provision for minoritized women and children have highlighted (Burman et al, 2004).

So, for many, 'community' (or 'communities') is so imbued with ideological components that other terms are preferable. Indeed, in addition to its implicitly racialised character, one key matter overlooked by discussions of 'community' is class. Currently inside academic debate as well as outside there is much discussion about 'new social movement's that are creating (or re-creating) networks and relationships that are not structured according to age or gender hierarchies (and so challenge or trouble the adult-child binary), and that do not correspond to traditional forms of political organisation. While 'community' retains some territorial connotations of rural nostalgia or humanist belonging that command posthumanist suspicion, it remains to be seen whether or how 'social movements' will replace 'communities'. Certainly it is a better substitution than another candidate, the 'social enterprise', that has arisen through the permeation of neoliberalism into social and community mobilisation now used to designate self-organised support and campaigning groups.

Endings or beginnings?

It would be counter to posthuman analysis to arrive at any firm conclusions, but three threads of argument can be drawn together that indicate lines of inquiry relevant for reconceptualisation of (the relations between) children, families and communities in psychology and early education. In particular, such moves may facilitate recent calls to build connections with other disciplines, especially articulated from 'the new social studies of childhood' which historically has (understandably) been critical of traditional developmental psychological and educational theories (Thorne, 2007; Alanen, 2010).

First, posthuman analyses are neither utopian nor dystopian. What this means is that, while informed by a critical impulse, there are also clear ethical-political commitments guiding posthuman discussions. Precisely as a result of the criticisms of progress and teleology, however, they are not fixed on a specific future vision or ideal, for this could install easy recuperations. After all, notwithstanding the creative and transgressive work underway, the project to attend to and reconfigure animal-human

relations is not immune from familialist and colonialist (re)constructions. It is important to remember how the early child-saving movement in Britain employed religiously-sanctioned patriarchal models through analogy with Christian imagery of the Holy Family. While the earliest animal protection society in the world, the Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), was formed in Britain 50 years before its child protection movement, this too had its class and cultural exclusionary features which - as Gandhi (2006) notes - were also played out through its differences from the Vegetarian Society (founded in Manchester in 1847). In her history of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Flegel (1989) suggests that such familialism played a role within the tensions, and subsequent parting of the ways, between the NSPCC and its supportive predecessor the RSPCA, quoting articles in *The Child's Guardian* (an NSPCC publication) in 1887 where '...The choice of these parents to care for animals before their children is a sign of their savagery, of their failure to respect and protect the sanctified space of the home' (p.63). Both historically, and currently, significant political and analytical opportunities were overlooked in failing to attend to gender, generational and cross-species intersections, with significant consequences: Flegel (2009: 72) suggests '...by severing the child from the animal, the NSPCC failed to recognise the ways in which narratives of child-animal suffering might help to illuminate problems of power, cruelty and domination.'

Secondly, analytically and methodologically, there is a focus on specificity, particularity and contingency (rather than generalisation, standardisation and universality). Earlier I discussed how Strathern (1992) framed her arguments in terms of mid-twentieth century Englishness. This was a specific intervention in a particular disciplinary set of debates (in English anthropology), yet it also acts as an exemplar for a mode of analysis and argumentation that elaborates new criteria for coherence and engaged scholarship, challenging scientism and mere adaptationist notions of 'application'. Indeed the French political theorist Badiou has precisely argued for a specific understanding of ethically-informed practice, such that ethics... 'should be referred back to particular situations. Rather than reduce it to an aspect of pity for victims, it should become the enduring maxim of singular processes.' (p.2). Similarly, in her *Companion Species Manifesto*, Haraway (2003) argues that kinship claims are forged through a material history of joint and relational activity, rather than abstract *a priori* commitments. They are '... made possible by the concrescence of prehensions of many actual occasions. Companion species rest on contingent foundations' (p. 5). Hence from specific analysis of dogtraining, she arrives at a position that 'the origin of rights is in committed relationship, not in separate and pre-existing category identities' (p.53).

A third feature arises as an effect of the second; the attention to affect as both topic and analytic resource. The affective turn - in its both negative and positive versions (Clough with Halley, 2007) - has been central to many methodological innovations and interventions in educational and social research. Its impact has been felt less within developmental psychological research, although the rise of psychosocial studies is now starting to have some impact here (Britzman, 2011). Beyond static rationalist models of reflexivity, the affective turn promises to support politically engaged and innovative research that attends to the apparently minor or insignificant, the fleeting and the non, or less rational, in research relations and accounting practices (Burman, in press) . Further, attending to affect as a relational effect of multiple and complex interactions helps to ward off the individualisation and privatisation of models of the detached and isolated researcher to foster rigorous and engaged practice (Ahmed, 2004; Luke and Gore, 1992; Leathwood and Hey, 2009; Hey and Leathwood, 2009) .

Such critical perspectives also have implications for understandings of children's rights, and their sometimes apparently tense relations with culturally-inflected discourses of childhood - for both presume an abstracted domain of elaboration and application. Instead of treating rights as western-framed cultural universals that overlook other cultural practices, Reynolds *et al* (2006) characterise 'children's rights as social practices that emerge from the encounter between everyday experiences and the body of knowledge on which practical decision-making is based' (p.297). Further lessons for childhood researchers include attending to the dangers of overstating what our research does. As Gallacher and Gallagher (2009) highlight, to be more modest and limited in our claims, to enjoy and celebrate 'immature' or limited research that helps slow down the societal over-readiness to apply and 'roll out' or 'scale up' such claims, in particular in instrumentalizing early childhood development and education.

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ⁱ Hence whereas Latour (1993) suggested that ‘we have never been modern’ to topicalise and complicate the limits and reach of modernity, many feminist and postcolonial critics claimed (e.g. Jackson, 1992) ‘We have never been human’, in the sense of oppressed groups not yet being accorded full subject status.

ⁱⁱ In previous work (Burman, 2013), rather than merely lament the limits of prevailing approaches, I explored what drives the *desire for* development; that is, to explore the emotional as well as economic investments and subjective attachments that fuel its repetition even amid so many obvious problems. Such a (psychoanalytic) focus usefully disrupts the progressivist linearity of the temporal perspective by which development is typically viewed by looking backwards rather than forwards. But despite its possible use as an intervention, this move too partakes of modernist assumptions even as it disrupts them. This chapter therefore attempts to move the arguments beyond such limitations.

ⁱⁱⁱ Not the question of potential, rather than an intrinsic claim. As Haraway herself often notes, many commentators in citing her ‘cyborg manifesto’ overlook its subtitle, which qualifies it as ‘ironic’. Indeed Haraway’s address at that time was probably primarily to technophobic feminists. Thus in elaborating a ‘socialist-feminist’ vision that engages with current material, technological developments, she was countering the then key current of cultural feminism. (Hence the refrain, I’d rather be a cyborg than a goddess.)

^{iv} Examples abound, but a key one would be the way debates over Muslim women wearing the hijab or even nikab come to stand in for wider discussions about national identity. So much of the debate fails to consider why such arguments are being played out over what women wear, so precisely both trivialising women’s own struggles and reiterating the elision between women and cultural representation.